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THE RULE OF FAITH IN THE ECCLESIASTICAL WRITINGS OF THE FIRST TWO CENTURIES

AN HISTORICO-APOLOGETICAL INVESTIGATION

Dissertation

SUBMITTED TO THE FACULTY OF THE SACRED SCIENCES AT THE CATHOLIC UNIVERSITY OF AMERICA IN PARTIAL FULFILMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF

DOCTOR IN SACRED THEOLOGY

BY THE

REV. ALPHONSE JOHN COAN, O. F. M., S. T. L.,
OF THE PROVINCE OF THE SACRED HEART,
ST. LOUIS, MISSOURI

THE CATHOLIC UNIVERSITY OF AMERICA
WASHINGTON, D. C.
1924

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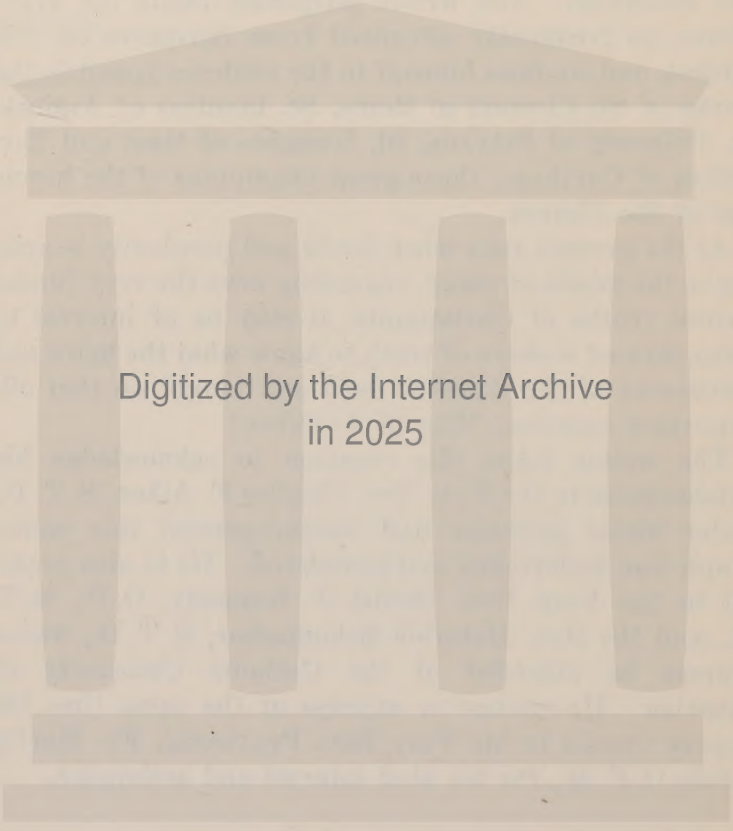
PREFACE.

The following study on the Rule of Faith centers around the principal ecclesiastical writings of the first two centuries. The writer purposely omits the arguments, so frequently advanced from Scripture on this subject, and confines himself to the evidence found in the works of St. Clement of Rome, St. Ignatius of Antioch, St. Polycarp of Smyrna, St. Irenaeus of Gaul and Tertullian of Carthage, those great champions of the heroic age of the Church.

At the present time when doubt and perplexity is arising in the minds of many, regarding even the very fundamental truths of Christianity, it may be of interest to some earnest seekers of truth to know what the heirs and successors of the Apostles held and taught on that all-important question, Why do I believe?

The writer takes this occasion to acknowledge his indebtedness to the Very Rev. Charles F. Aiken, S. T. D., under whose guidance and encouragement this monograph was undertaken and completed. He is also grateful to the Very Rev. Daniel J. Kennedy, O. P., S. T. M., and the Rev. Heinrich Schumacher, S. T. D., whose courses he attended at the Catholic University of America. He wishes to express at the same time his sincere thanks to his Very Rev. Provincial, Fr. Martin Strub, O. F. M., for his kind interest and assistance.

Mt. St. Sepulchre,
Washington, D. C.,
Feast of St. Joseph, 1924.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INTRODUCTORY CHAPTER.

The Rule of Faith.

Christians are divided into two great camps concerning the rule of faith. The one rallies round the Catholic standard, the other round the Protestant. The one insists on the authority of a divinely established Church, the other clings to private interpretation of the Bible. No little controversy has been carried on between the two parties down through the last three centuries. Catholics maintained that Protestants had broken away from the Apostolic faith and traditions; Protestants declared that the Catholic hierarchy had distorted Christ's ideal, had robbed the Christians of that primitive spiritual freedom and established an autocracy incompatible with the mind of Christ and the Apostles.

Until the last part of the nineteenth century Protestants carried on a continual warfare against the authority of the Church. For arguments they frequently resorted to ridicule and calumny. In recent times this procedure has been dropped. The Protestant critic today pursues an entirely different course. He goes back to the early writings of the Church and seeks a vindication of his standpoint in the history of the primitive Church. This method is both enlightening and gratifying. It is the right course of procedure, for the early ecclesiastical writings, coming as they do, from men closely associated with the Apostles themselves, are invaluable guides in doctrinal disputes.

Protestant critics, however, do not find the testimony of the early Church documents favorable to the Catholic position. They see in them rather an argument for Protestantism.

It is the purpose of the present work, therefore, to examine the early ecclesiastical literature and ascertain, whether it bears witness to Catholicism or Protestantism, in other words, whether it is an argument for the Catholic rule of faith or for the Protestant.

The Catholic Rule of Faith.

Before entering upon the problem, however, it is important to know just what is meant by the rule of faith. At the same time it is necessary to have a clear notion of the Catholic rule of faith and of the Protestant, and to know wherein lies the real bone of contention.

The word *rule* (Latin, *regula,*—Greek, *κανών*) means a standard or measure, with which something can be tested. A rule of faith, therefore, signifies a standard for our faith, a norm by which we can know with certainty, what we must believe in order to be saved. It is something extrinsic to our faith.

The Catholic rule of faith is expressed in one of the decrees of the Vatican Council: "*Porro fide divina et catholica ea omnia credenda sunt, quae in verbo Dei scripto vel tradito continentur et ab Ecclesia sive solemni judicio sive ordinario et universali magisterio tamquam divinitus revelata credenda proponuntur.*" [1]

This definition contains two important elements. First, it indicates the sources of our belief, namely, Scripture and Tradition,—"*quae in verbo Dei scripto vel tradito continentur.*" This is called in the language of the theologians the remote rule of faith, *regula fidei remota.* Secondly, it gives the reason for our belief, namely, the teaching authority of the Church. The Church draws her doctrine from the teaching of the Apostles as manifested in the Scriptures and Tradition. These doctrines she proposes to the faithful either by a solemn decision or by the ordinary and universal magis-

[1] Denzinger-Bannwart, *Enchiridion Symbolorum* (1922), p. 476, no. 1792.

terium,—"*et ab Ecclesia sive solemni judicio sive ordinario et universali magisterio tamquam divinitus revelata credenda proponuntur.*" This is known as the proximate rule of faith, the *regula fidei proxima.*

The Apostles were commissioned by Christ not to write the Gospel, but to preach it. "Going therefore, teach ye all nations."[2] "Go ye into the whole world and preach the gospel to every creature."[3] That the Apostles obeyed this divine mandate is evident from numerous passages in the Acts of the Apostles[4] and from many instances in the Letters of St. Paul. The latter, for example, writes: "Therefore, brethren, stand fast; and hold the traditions which you have learned, whether by word, or by our epistle";[5] "and the things which thou hast heard of me by many witnesses, the same commend to faithful men, who shall be fit to teach others also."[6]

As Lightfoot remarks: "The Christian teachers in primitive ages were evangelists, not authors, preachers, not historians. The written literature was only the casual efflorescence of the spoken."[7] The Apostles wrote only incidentally, and then for special grave reasons. They wrote not for the universal Church, but for individual communities. In some cases they wrote to individuals, as the Epistles of St. Paul to Timothy, Titus and Philemon testify. Besides only a few of the disciples wrote. Moreover, the doctrine of Christ was known before it was recorded by the evangelists, and the whole religion of Christ was active before one of them began to write. Hence Scripture alone cannot be the sole source of doctrine. It must be supplemented by Tradition.

If the written Word were the sole rule of faith, then

[2] Mt. xxviii, 19.
[3] Mark, xvi, 15.
[4] Cfr. Acts, ii, iii, iv, v, viii, ix, xi, xiii, etc.
[5] II Thess. ii, 14.
[6] II Tim. ii, 2.
[7] *Apostolic Fathers* (1890), Part I, Vol. I, p. 1.

only those who can read would have a chance to be saved. A rule of faith, however, must be accessible to all. If Scripture alone were our only authority in doctrinal matters, then why are there so many difficulties in Holy Writ? Even St. Peter tells us that the Epistles of St. Paul contain "certain things hard to be understood, which the unlearned and unstable wrest, as they do also the other Scriptures, to their own destruction." [8] But a rule of faith must be easy to ascertain. These are the arguments advanced by Catholics in defence of their standard of belief.

And since the Church was the recipient of the apostolic teaching, since she has faithfully preserved and zealously guarded this doctrine down through the centuries, she is able to tell us what that teaching is. Since she has received the assurance of the special assistance of the Holy Ghost, she is able to give us the true interpretation of the apostolic doctrine. She is *the* authority. Hence it is on the authority of the Church that Catholics depend for their belief. Ask a Catholic why he believes in the Immaculate Conception, or why he holds the doctrine of papal infallibility, and he will answer, "The Church teaches it." The infallible, authoritative teaching voice of the Church is, therefore, the Catholic's standard of belief, his rule of faith.

The Protestant Rule of Faith.

Very different, however, is the Protestant conception of the rule of faith. Protestants claim that the Bible, and the Bible only, interpreted by the judgment of the individual, is the rule of faith. The Augsburg Confession, the first and most important Lutheran Symbol, does not mention the Bible principle, but it is nevertheless based upon it. The preface declares, that the Confession is "derived from the Holy Scriptures and pure Word of

[8] II Peter, iii, 16.

God."[9] The Form of Concord, however, is more explicit. It begins: "We believe, teach and confess that the only rule and norm, according to which all dogmas and all doctors ought to be esteemed and judged, is no other whatever than the prophetic and apostolic writings both of the Old and New Testaments."[10]

That the Reformed Churches make the Scripture their sole rule of faith is indicated in the First Helvetic Confession, composed in 1536 A. D. It expressly states, that the canonical Scripture alone perfectly contains the Word of God, the things handed down by the Holy Spirit, and proposed to the world by the prophets and Apostles, the most perfect and most ancient philosophy of all things, all piety, all reason of life. Its interpretation must be sought in itself, as it is the interpreter of itself, the guiding rule being charity and faith.[11] And the Second Helvetic Confession adds, we endure no other judge in the cause of faith than God Himself, pronouncing through the Holy Scriptures, what is true, what is false, what must be done, what must be avoided.[12]

The French Confession of Faith, prepared by Calvin and his pupil De Chandieu (1559 A. D.), also professes the same standard of belief. "The Scriptures," it says, "are the sure rule of faith and are known not so much by the common accord and consent of the Church as by the testimony and illumination of the Holy Spirit."[13]

The same truth is expressed by the Westminster Con-

[9] Schaff, P., *Creeds of Christendom* (1877), Vol. III, p. 4.

[10] *Ibid.*, p. 93-94.

[11] Schaff, *Op. cit.*, Vol. III, p. 211-212: "Scriptura canonica Verbum Dei, Spiritu Sancto tradita, et per prophetas apostolosque mundo proposita, omnium perfectissima et antiquissima Philosophia, pietatem omnem, omnem vitae rationem sola perfecte continet. Hujus interpretatio ex ipsa sola petenda est, ut ipsa interpres sit sui, caritatis fideique regula moderante."

[12] *Ibid.*, p. 239: Non alium sustinemus in causa fidei judicem, quam ipsum Deum, per Scripturas Sanctas pronunciantem, quid verum sit, quid falsum, quid sequendum, quidve fugiendum."

[13] *Ibid.*, p. 361.

fession (1647 A. D.). "The authority of the Holy Scripture for which it ought to be believed and obeyed, dependeth not upon the testimony of any man or Church, but wholly upon God (who is truth itself), the author thereof; and therefore it is to be received, because it is the Word of God. Yet, notwithstanding, our full persuasion and assurance of the infallible truth, and divine authority thereof, is from the inward work of the Holy Spirit, bearing witness by and with the Word in our hearts." [14]

Going down the centuries one finds that all the later and more modern sects base their doctrine on the same principle. In fact it can truly be said that they give even greater latitude to private interpretation.

In defence of their rule of faith Protestants say, that the religion of Christ was preached by the Apostles and then committed to writing, and this writing has been handed down from one age to another. Now, they say, a rule of faith must be sufficiently plain and intelligible and certain. The Bible has these requisites. It is sufficiently clear, at least, on those points which are to be believed and practised. It is a sufficiently certain norm, for it contains the apostolic doctrine, and there is no reason to believe that the sacred books suffered any substantial alteration. Since the Bible contains the whole preaching of the Apostles, it alone suffices. Tradition is not necessary. Nor is there any need of an authoritative teaching voice. Holy Scripture is the complete and sole rule of faith, both remote and proximate, both active and passive.

The Point of Controversy.

From the foregoing it is apparent that the controversy between the two religious elements centers round authority. The one rule of faith is based on the authority of the Church; the other, on the authority of the Bible, pri-

[14] Schaff, *Op. cit.*, Vol. III, p. 602-603.

vately interpreted. The one is founded on the authoritative teaching voice of the Church; the other, on what each individual thinks to be the voice of God contained in the Bible. Both sides find a vindication of their respective doctrine in the practice and teaching of the early Church. For that reason a study of the early ecclesiastical writings may help clarify the problem.

CHAPTER I.

St. Clement of Rome.

1. *St. Clement, an Important Witness.*

An important witness for the rule of faith in the early Church is St. Clement of Rome. St. Clement, according to a very ancient list of popes made by Hegesippus at the time of Pope Anicetus (ca. 160), was the third successor of St. Peter to the See of Rome, i. e., the fourth pope. Eusebius reckons his pontificate from the twelfth year of Domitian's reign to the third of Trajan's (92-101 A. D.).[1]

Clement enjoyed peculiar prominence in the early Church, not only on account of his high position, but also on account of his relations to the Apostles Peter and Paul. St. Irenaeus tells us, that Clement 'saw the Apostles themselves, that he conversed with them, and that he had their preaching still ringing in his ears and had their tradition still present before his eyes, and that he was not the only one, but many others there were still who had been taught by the Apostles.'[2] Epiphanius also, probably on the testimony of Hegesippus, speaks of Clement as a contemporary of St. Peter and St. Paul.[3] Besides, as Lightfoot remarks, "the tradition that he was the disciple of one or both of these Apostles is early, constant and definite, and borne out by the character and contents of the epistle itself."[4] Being therefore, a disciple of the two foremost Apostles and being conversant in their doctrine, he is an excellent witness to the teach-

[1] *Historia Ecclesiastica*, III, 15, 34.
[2] *Adversus Haereses*, III, 3, 3.
[3] *Haereses*, XXVII, 6.
[4] *Op. cit.*, Vol. I, p. 361.

ing of the Church of Rome in his day. As such he is looked upon by contemporary and later writers. So highly, in fact, was he esteemed that he was believed by some ancient writers to have been the author of the Epistle to the Hebrews. The Clementine writings, evidently of a later period, were given out in his name. The position assigned to him in this romance "is inexplicable," says Lightfoot, "except on the supposition that he was known in the Church at large as an expositor of the apostolic doctrine, whether by authorship or by preaching or both." [5]

2. *Letter to the Corinthians.*

St. Clement's testimony regarding the rule of faith is to be found in his *Epistle to the Corinthians.* This work was occasioned by a disturbance in the Church of Corinth. A few 'headstrong and self-willed' men had arisen against their ecclesiastical superiors and driven them from office.[6] In consequence the community at Corinth was in great confusion (ch. 3), and those outside the Church had a pretext to 'heap blasphemies on the name of the Lord' (ch. 47). In order that peace be restored in the divided community, Clement wrote the Corinthians a long, fatherly letter, in which he inculcated the duties of meekness, humility and obedience and submission to lawful, ecclesiastical authority.

That Clement was the author of this letter there can be no doubt.[7] The evidence in his favor is so strong,

[5] *Op. cit.*, Vol. I, p. 361.

[6] Cfr. 1, 1, and 47. That the schism was due to a revolt of the office-bearers against the ecstatic 'spiritual' preachers rests on no satisfactory basis. There is no indication in the epistle that the preaching of the Word of God was carried on by the so-called *pneumatici.* Nor does the Letter give any reasons to suppose that the trouble was caused by disputes between a Pauline and an anti-Pauline party.

[7] Schwegler and Baur denied the authenticity as well as the integrity of the writing. They were ably refuted, however, by Bunsen and Ritschl.

that no fair-minded critic can reject it. There is in the first place the testimony of Dionysius, Bishop of Corinth, who (ca. 170 A. D.) in his letter to Pope Soter (ca. 166-170 A. D.) says: "Today we have celebrated the Lord's holy day, in which we have read your Letter. From it, whenever we read it, we shall always be able to draw advice, as also from the former Letter which was written to us by Clement: *ὡς καὶ τὴν προτέραν ἡμῖν διὰ Κλήμεντος γραφεῖσαν*, sc. *ἐπιστολήν*."[8] This evidence is quite decisive. The letter comes from the Church of Corinth. It is sent to the Church of Rome. There is consequently the testimony of the two Churches concerned. Dionysius takes it as a matter of course that the epistle of Clement is well known in both communities. And the testimony is all the more important, since it mentions St. Clement's letter incidentally.

Then there is the testimony of St. Irenaeus (ca. 180 A. D.). St. Irenaeus associates the letter with Clement's name. In his work *Adversus Haereses*, III, 3, 3 we read: "In the time of this Clement, no small dissension, having occurred among the brethren at Corinth, the Church in Rome dispatched a most powerful letter to the Corinthians (*ἐπὶ τούτου οὖν τοῦ Κλήμεντος . . . ἐπέστειλεν ἡ ἐν Ῥώμῃ ἐκκλησία ἱκανωτάτην γραφὴν τοῖς Κορινθίοις*) exhorting them to peace, renewing their faith, and declaring the tradition which it had lately received from the apostles."

Clement of Alexandria (ca. 200 A. D.) is even more explicit. He speaks of the letter as Clement's at least four times.[9] All later writers, as Origen, Eusebius, Cyril of Jerusalem, Basil of Alexandria and others, assign the epistle to Clement of Rome. Nor has the letter ever been assigned to anyone else. Clement, in view of his association with the Apostles and his prominent position

[8] Eusebius, *Hist. Eccles.*, IV, 23, 11. The translation is taken from Bardenhewer-Shahan's *Patrology* (1908), p. 27. Literally *διὰ Κλήμεντος* means "through" Clement.

[9] *Stromata*, I, 7, 38; IV, 17-19; IV, 18, 113; VI, 8, 65.

in the Church, was certainly the logical man to write the work. Critics, therefore, are unanimous at the present time in ascribing it to Clement of Rome.

That the epistle is a faithful interpretation of the apostolic doctrine, is most reasonable to hold. Love for the Apostles would make Clement abhor any deviation from their teaching. Irenaeus assigns the greatest importance to the letter.[10] And the reason is, as Lightfoot remarks, because it records "the traditional interpretation of the apostolic teaching which prevailed in the great Church of Rome from the earliest times." "In no sense does he regard it in itself as a primary source of truth."[11] "He describes not the *source* but the *channel* of the apostolic tradition, though the channel at the point where the stream issues from its sources."[12]

The date commonly assigned to the letter is 95 or 96 A. D. Harnack says, that external and internal evidence place the epistle at the end of Domitian's reign, namely, between the years 93 and 95, scarcely later.[13] The work has come down to us in two Greek codices, the Codex Alexandrinus and the Codex Ierosolymitanus.[14]

3. *Objection of Protestant Critics.*

While the great majority of Protestant critics admit the Clementine authorship, they declare at the same time that the letter is the work, not of an individual, but of the Roman community. They seek to justify their view by saying that Clement was merely 'the spokesman,' 'the natural mouthpiece of the Church of Rome in its communication with a sister community.'[15]

[10] *Op. cit.*, III, 3, 3. [11] *Op. cit.*, Vol. I, p. 366. [12] *Ibid.*

[13] *Geschichte der altchristlichen Literatur*, II. Bd., Vol. I, p. 255.

[14] Cfr. Lightfoot's *Apostolic Fathers*, Vol. I, p. 116 sq. Bardenhewer, *Die Geschichte der altkirchlichen Literatur* (1913), Vol. I, p. 126; Gebhardt-Harnack, *Texte und Untersuchungen* (1893), II. Bd., p. 20 sq.

[15] Cfr. Lightfoot, *Op. cit.*, Vol. I, p. 358 sq.; Marsh, *Dictionary of the Apostolic Age* (1916), Vol. I, p. 217.

The grounds for this hypothesis are, first, the letter nowhere claims to have been written by Clement. It is written in the name of the Roman community. "The Church of God, which sojourneth in Rome to the Church of God which sojourned in Corinth" (ch. 1).

Secondly, the plural form is used, 'we consider,' 'receive our counsel,' 'the words spoken by Him through us,' 'we shall be guiltless of this sin,' etc.

Thirdly, the early testimonies, e. g., of Hegesippus and Irenaeus are not explicit enough, and the words of Dionysius of Corinth διὰ Κλήμεντος (by, thru, by the hands of) is ambiguous, since it may mean anyone of three things, either the author or the amanuensis or the bearer of the letter. Clement of Alexandria (ca. 200 A. D.), they remind us, was the first to state expressly that Clement of Rome was the author.[16]

Catholic and conservative Protestant critics, on the other hand, maintain that the letter is that of Clement, and not of the Church of Rome; the work of an individual, and not of a community. They refuse to reject an ancient and time-honored tradition, for which there is so strong a body of evidence. "Many years before the earliest of the above-named writers flourished," says Lightfoot, "Clement of Rome is regarded as an author; and the language used of him is only explained by the existence of such a letter commonly attributed to him."[17]

Moreover, the objections raised against the Clementine authorship can be readily solved. It is said that Clement nowhere mentions his name. It is true Clement's name does not occur. This omission, however, may have been a precautionary measure. The epistle was written just as the Domitian persecution was drawing to a close. There was still danger in the air. A man of Clement's position would be a much-prized victim by

[16] Cfr. Lightfoot, *Op. cit.*, Vol. I, p. 358.
[17] *Op. cit.*, Vol. I, p. 359.

the government spies. By concealing his name in a letter of this kind, which must go all the way to Corinth and which might easily fall into the hands of government informers, Clement was only acting according to the rules of prudence. Nor was it necessary for him to sign his name. The letter was forwarded by messengers, through whom the Corinthians must have been told who was the author.

It is true the epistle is written in the name of the Roman Church. Clement, however, was the chief authority in the Roman Church, and when speaking officially, he might quite naturally say 'The Church of Rome,' just as nowadays we sometimes speak of the Church of Rome meaning thereby the Pope. When a diocesan bishop makes a regulation for his diocese, we say the diocese has decreed this or that. The fact that the letter of Clement is written in the name of the Roman Church is by no means an argument, therefore, against Clementine authorship, but rather an argument in its favor; for no one, except the Bishop himself, would assume to write in the name of the Roman Church. According to Eusebius some years later an epistle was written by Dionysius, Bishop of Corinth, to the Romans and addressed to Pope Soter, Bishop of Rome at that time.[18] Pope Victor wrote to Polycrates, and from the answer of Polycrates, it seems most probable that Victor wrote in the name of the Roman Church. The remonstrance of Irenaeus makes it only too plain that the letter was that of Victor.

It was for this very reason that Clement, writing an official letter in the name of the Roman Church, uses the plural form, as for example, 'we consider,' 'receive our counsel,' etc. The *pluralis majestaticus* was the appropriate and customary form of an official letter.

The third argument adduced against Clementine authorship rests on a few unwarranted conclusions. If the

[18] *Hist. Eccles.*, IV, 23, 9.

testimonies of Hegesippus, Dionysius of Corinth and Irenaeus are not sufficient to establish the Clementine authorship, it must at least be said that they are important evidence in its favor.

Eusebius, before citing some passages of Hegesippus tells us that Hegesippus 'makes some remarks relating to the epistle of Clement to the Corinthians,' (*μετά τινα περὶ τῆς Κλήμεντος πρὸς Κορινθίους ἐπιστολῆς αὐτῷ εἰρημένα.*[19] Eusebius does not quote the exact words, it is said, and one can not rely too much on Eusebius. There is no reason, however, to doubt Eusebius, especially since he does not contradict the evidence of other witnesses, but agrees with it.

Dionysius of Corinth, it is argued, uses an ambiguous term *διὰ Κλήμεντος*. Now it is unwarranted in this case to say that *διὰ Κλήμεντος* can have any other meaning than Clementine authorship. It cannot mean 'the bearer of the letter,' for the letter itself states, that Claudius Ephebus and Valerius Bito and Fortunatus were the ones entrusted with the letter. "Now send ye back speedily unto us our messengers Claudius Ephebus and Valerius Bito, together with Fortunatus also" (ch. 65, 1). Nor can it mean the amanuensis, because it was not customary to ascribe a work to the amanuensis. Caesar, Cicero and other writers of the time evidently employed amanuenses, but their books are not ascribed to the latter. Clement, Bishop of Rome, was more than an amanuensis. The passage of Dionysius has only one satisfactory meaning, and that is, that Clement is the author.

As to the testimony of Irenaeus to the effect that the Church of Rome sent a most sufficient letter to the Corinthians in the time of Clement, it should be read in conjunction with the evidence of Dionysius and Eusebius and Clement of Alexandria. Isolated from the context, this passage of Irenaeus (*Adv. Haer.* III, 3, 3) may seem

[19] *Op. cit.*, IV, 22, 11.

a weak argument, but read in connection with the whole context, it plainly bears witness to Clementine authorship. If Clement is not taken to be the author of the work in the true sense of the word, how can one account for the fact that his name, and none other, has been associated with the letter? How can one account for the great mass of evidence and the constant tradition, which assigns the epistle to Clement?

Moreover, the strong personal tone of the letter and the constant, uniform style of the whole, plainly show that the work is the composition not of a number of individuals, but of one man. Paternal solicitude is evinced by the author throughout. In the very beginning he gives expression to his regret, because he is hindered from writing sooner. "We consider that we have been somewhat tardy in giving heed to the matters of dispute that have arisen among you, dearly beloved, . . ." (ch. 1). He grieves that the Corinthians, whose "name, once revered and renowned and lovely in the sight of all men, hath been greatly reviled" (ch. 1). It is with the loving memory of a father that he recounts their past goodness, their humility and obedience. "Ye were sincere and simple and free from malice one towards another. Every sedition and every schism was abominable to you" (ch. 2). He is continually exhorting and admonishing them. "These things, dearly beloved, we write, not only as admonishing you, but also as putting ourselves in remembrance" (ch. 7). "Wherefore let us be obedient unto His excellent and glorious will," (ch. 9); "Let us therefore be lowly-minded, brethren, laying aside all arrogance and conceit and folly and anger, and let us do that which is written," (ch. 13); "Therefore it is right and proper, brethren, that we should be obedient unto God," (ch. 14); and thus he continues throughout the whole epistle. Clement identifies himself with the Corinthians. He is one of them. He is just as eager for their welfare as he is for his own. The paternal solicitude and fatherly atti-

tude would hardly be present, if the letter was the work of a number of individuals.

Moreover the uniformity of style and form of expression throughout excludes all thought of several authors. The same words, phrases and expressions are interwoven again and again throughout the letter, there is constant reference to the Old Testament, and Hebraisms abound in it. This uniformity of thought, tone and expression are arguments in favor of one individual author.

4. *Rule of Faith in Clement's Letter.*

The Letter of Clement, then, is a good witness for the rule of faith. The work is not a doctrinal treatise. No mention is made of heretical tendencies. It deals with a disciplinary question. Hence the arguments for the subject at issue are few and incidental, but for that very reason all the more convincing.

a) The Letter, an Authoritative Message.

A question, which confronts us at the very outset is, does the letter evince any trace of authority? This question is intimately connected with the subject in hand, and of importance for it. Catholic critics say, the epistle is an authoritative message. Non-Catholic writers maintain, that it is merely a letter of brotherly love, a letter of exhortation, written by a sister community. Thus Harnack writes: "It (the Roman Church) felt bound, for conscience' sake, to give a serious, brotherly admonition, conscious that God's voice spoke through its words for peace, and that at the same time for the strict maintenance of respect towards the authority of the officials. (Cp. xl. f.). Withal it never forgets that its place is merely to point out the right road to the Corinthians, not to lay commands upon them;[20] over and again it expresses most admirably its firm confidence that the

[20] Cp. esp. LVIII, 2, δέξασθε τὴν συμβουλὴν ἡμῶν = accept our counsel.

church knows the will of God and will bethink itself once more of what is the proper course (Cp. xl. 1, xlv. 2, liii. 3)."[21] Lange,[22] Hatch,[23] Lightfoot,[24] Pfleiderer,[25] Rainy,[26] Marsh,[27] and others speak in similar strains. "As a matter of principle, it was the business of any Christian community to step in and heal the breach," but "as a matter of fact it was the Church of Rome which actually did so," says Marsh.[28] "Such an act," he adds, "was characteristic of the early Roman Church."[29] And Rainy remarks, "that the Church of Rome from its position, the character of its membership, and the habits of thought and action naturally acquired in a great center of government, could interpose in such cases with advice which was likely to be wise, and felt entitled to deference."[30]

Now, it is true the letter is for the most part one of exhortation. But at the same time it contains a marked tone of authority. This is evident from such passages as: "Ye therefore that laid the foundation of the sedition, submit yourselves unto the presbyters (*ὑποτάγητε τοῖς πρεσβυτέροις*) and receive chastisement unto repentance, bending the knees of your heart. Learn to submit yourselves (*μάθετε ὑποτάσσεσθαι*), laying aside the arrogant and proud stubbornness of your tongue" (ch. 57). "Receive our counsel, and ye shall have no occasion of regret (*δέξασθε τὴν συμβουλὴν ἡμῶν καὶ ἔσται ἀμεταμέλητα ὑμῖν*)." (ch. 58). Indeed the phrases, 'submit yourselves to the presbyters,' 'receive chastisement,' 'receive our

[21] *Expansion of Christianity* (1904), translated by James Moffatt, Vol. I, p. 245.

[22] *Geschichte der Kirche* (1854), Vol. II, p. 479.

[23] *Organization of the Early Christian Churches* (1888), Lecture VII, p. 171.

[24] *Op. cit.*, p. 1.

[25] *Das Urchristentum* (1902), Vol. II, p. 576.

[26] *The Ancient Catholic Church* (1902), p. 52.

[27] *Op. cit.*, Vol. I, p. 244.

[28] *Ibid.* [29] *Ibid.* [30] *Op. cit.*, p. 52.

counsel,' may be taken in an exhortatory way, but taken in the context, it is plain that there is more than an exhortation expressed. Clement bids the Corinthians submit to the presbyters and do penance, accept his counsel or suffer for their disobedience. In other words he plainly tells them, that they must obey or take the consequences. Clement, of course, is speaking 'with intense moderation.'[31] This expression indicates that he would be justified in using stronger and more imperative language, if he chose to do so. He realizes that 'self-willed and headstrong men,' who refuse obedience to their local superiors, would at the least provocation spurn obedience to higher authority. The situation was an extremely delicate one. Clement, however, is equal to the task. He shows himself a master of diplomacy and psychology. In order not to throw fuel on the burning flames and thus thwart his purpose, he skilfully veils his authority under the mask of exhortation. Finally after a beautiful discourse on harmony and order and an urgent appeal for humility and submission, he lets his authoritative power gently ooze forth from beneath the 'let us' disguise, and very firmly and decisively bids the refractious element of the Corinthians follow out his counsel and exhortation or suffer for their disobedience. He reminds them too very beautifully and modestly that it is their duty to 'accept' his 'counsel.' "But if certain persons should be disobedient to the words spoken by Him through us, let them understand that they will entangle themselves in no slight transgression and danger; but we shall be guiltless of this sin" (ch. 59).

[31] Cfr. Lightfoot, *Op. cit.*, p. 97. "The third characteristic of the writer is *moderation*, the sobriety of temper and reasonableness of conduct, which is expressed by the word ἐπιείκεια, . . . The words ἐπιεικής, ἐπιείκεια, occur many times in his epistle. In two several passages the substantive is qualified by a striking epithet, which seems to be its contradiction, ἐκτενὴς ἐπιείκεια, 'intense moderation.' The verbal paradox describes his own character. This gentleness and equability, this 'sweet resonableness,' was a passion with him."

If anyone dare disobey his command, which he as God's representative has given them,—note well, as God's representative, as God's mouth-piece, not as the mouth-piece of the Roman community,—they will commit a grave sin and run the risk of losing their immortal souls; Clement, however, will be free from guilt. He has done his duty. He has laid down for them the proper course to pursue. He has made known to them the will of God. Such language necessarily bespeaks authority. Otherwise, why should it be a sin to disobey his commands? How could he call himself the representative of God? Such language from one who had no authority, especially from an outsider would be an insult to the Corinthians. And the refractory party would be the first to resent it. Yet we know of no resentment. On the contrary there is reason to believe that Clement's letter had its desired effect, for from the epistle of Dionysius, Bishop of Corinth, to Pope Soter some years later we learn that the letter of St. Clement was highly prized by the Corinthians. "Today," Dionysius writes, "we have celebrated the Lord's holy day, in which we have read your Letter. From it whenever we read it, we shall always be able to draw advice, as also from the former Letter which was wriiten to us by Clement." [32]

Moreover, in a breach of discipline of this kind exhortation is not sufficient to restore order. Authority is needed, and there is no reason to believe that authority was not needed in this particular case. St. Paul had to intervene with an authoritative hand some years previous, when party-strifes were rife in the Church of Corinth. If, as some affirm, any community had the right to interpose, how account for the fact that the Roman Church, and the Roman Church alone, really did interpose? There was, for instance, the Church at Ephesus.

[32] Eusebius, *Hist. Eccles.* IV, 23, 11. Translation from Bardenhewer-Shahan, Patrology, p. 27.

It was an older community. It was close at hand. It was probably honored by St. John's presence. If it had the right to intervene, why did it not do so? Why did it fail to come to the aid of a sister community, whose interests would necessarily be closely allied to those of the neighboring Church of Corinth? Why cause an unnecessary prolongation of the schism till an exhortation or intervention or letter of brotherly love should come from far-away Rome, then overburdened with troubles of its own? The old traditional view of Catholic scholars offers the only satisfactory solution; Clement, as Bishop of Rome, as successor to St. Peter and as Head of all Christendom, authoritatively interposed in the Corinthian schism by writing the so-called First Epistle to the Corinthians.

The authoritative tone of the letter has not escaped the notice of some non-Catholic critics. Thus Gore, for example, says:[33] "If we could get behind the scenes, we should probably find that the chief authority really belonged to him (Clement), and that he was one of those 'men of reputation,' one of those 'rulers,' who since the Apostles' death had exercised that part of their ministry which was to become permanent in the Church." Dr. Middleton goes even further. In his recent work on *Unity and Rome,* he accepts the viewpoint of Catholic critics. He acknowledges Clement's jurisdiction, asserting that the epistle of Clement "was not in any sense gratuitous or intrusive." "Even at that early day in the history of the Church," he states, "the distracted Christians at Corinth turned naturally to the Apostolic See for guidance and help." "What," he exclaims, "would be the plain interpretation of this epistle of Clement of Rome, if the exigencies of Protestant Christians to bolster up their doctrinal positions did not color their opinions? Reading these passages from Clement

[33] *The Ministry of the Christian Church,* (1889), p. 325.

with charity and justice their witness for the Unity of the Holy Catholic Church and paternal solicitude of the successor of St. Peter for all the Churches, given and accorded, seems very clear." [34]

b) The Letter an Excellent Proof of the Divine Authority of the Bishops.

Not only is the letter of St. Clement written with a tone of authority that commands obedience under penalty of divine punishment, but it also bears witness, that the lawful authorities in the local churches rule and teach by divine right.

In chapter 42 there is a classical passage for the divine institution of the episcopate. Clement says: "The Apostles received the Gospel for us from the Lord Jesus Christ; Jesus Christ was sent forth from God. So then Christ is from God, and the Apostles are from Christ. Both therefore came of the will of God in the appointed order. Having therefore received a charge, and having been fully assured through the resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ and confirmed in the word of God with full assurance of the Holy Ghost, they went forth with the glad tidings that the kingdom of God should come. So preaching everywhere in country and town, they appointed their first-fruits when they had proved them by the Spirit, to be bishops and deacons unto them that should believe. And this they did in no new fashion; for indeed it had been written concerning bishops and deacons from very ancient times; for thus saith the scripture in a certain place, *I will appoint their bishops in righteousness and their deacons in faith*" [35] (ch. 42).

These words are a plain, straightforward testimony in favor of the divine authority of the bishops. The Apos-

[34] *Unity and Rome*, (1922), p. 99.

[35] The translations in this chapter from St. Clement's epistle are taken from Lightfoot's *Apostolic Fathers*; also the translations from the Ignatian letters and from the epistle of St. Polycarp, in the following chapters.

tles are from Christ, the bishops from the Apostles. "Both therefore came of the will of God in the appointed order. . . . So preaching everywhere in country and town, they appointed their first-fruits (*κατὰ χώρας οὖν καὶ πόλεις κηρύσσοντες καθίστανον τὰς ἀπαρχὰς αὐτῶν*) when they had proved them to be bishops and deacons unto them that should believe (*εἰς ἐπισκόπους καὶ διακόνους τῶν μελλόντων πιστεύειν*)." According to Clement the Apostles were directly commissioned by Christ to preach the Gospel, the bishops indirectly in as far as they received their appointment from the Apostles, but notwithstanding they have the same divine authority. They have the same right to rule, the same right to teach, and therefore, in virtue of this divine prerogative they cannot be deposed by the faithful. The words are in truth, as Moran remarks, "a fitting commentary of the words of St. Paul: 'The Holy Ghost has placed you overseers to rule the Church of God.'" [36]

Pfleiderer, commenting on the words of Clement, says: "Clement's idea (xlii. 4) that the Apostles, on their missionary journeys, themselves appointed the first bishops and deacons (which is certainly not the fact), already shows the beginning of the tendency to make the bishop's office, as the direct continuation of the apostolate, the depositary of tradition and to surround it with the nimbus of higher authority." [37]

According to him Clement either must have been mistaken, or he must have wanted to deceive the people. But Clement in view of his intimacy with the Apostles and his prominent position in the Church could hardly have been mistaken. He had associated with the Apostles themselves. One can hardly suppose, therefore, that he did not know their teaching and their mode of acting. Besides, as Bishop of Rome, the queen and mistress of

[36] *The Government of the Church in the First Century* (1913), p. 102.
[37] *Primitive Christianity* (1906-1911), translated by Montgomery, Vol. IV, p. 358.

the world at that time, to which city people gathered from almost every quarter of the globe, Clement came into contact with Christians from every country. These would quite naturally inform him of the thing nearest and dearest to his heart, the growth and spread of Christianity. Hence, he must have been well informed on all matters pertaining to the early Church.

There is little probability, therefore, that Clement was mistaken; there is still less probability, that he wished to deceive the people. There is not the slightest reason to suspect that Clement was trying to foist something new upon the faithful. Deceit and imposture were foreign to his noble character. He was a saintly, an humble and a modest man. The one characteristic resplendent throughout his letter is sincerity. He is convinced that every word, he utters, is true.

Falsehood in this case would defeat his purpose. The Corinthians knew full well what the Apostles had taught and done. Their words and their deeds were household words on the lips of the early Christians. They could not be deceived so easily, especially regarding so important a point, a point that involved a radical change in the very constitution of the Church. Had the Bishop of Rome tried to introduce something new, the Corinthians would have noticed it immediately, and would have resented it. The very thought of anything novel, or anything different from what they had learned from the Apostles, was repugnant to them.

Besides, Clement would be the last person to introduce anything new. He was a conservative of conservatives. He was noted for his scrupulous tenacity for the apostolic doctrines and customs. Hence, when he expresses himself on things apostolic, he has every claim to credence. And we have all the more reason to accept his words, as true, when we see that they agree exactly with the evidence of contemporary and later writers.

c) An Argument for the Apostolic Succession.

In chapter 42 the apostolic succession is clearly indicated,—Christ, the Apostles, and their successors, the bishops,—but it is brought out more forcibly in chapter 44, where Clement says: "And our Apostles knew through our Lord Jesus Christ that there would be strife over the name of the bishop's office. For this cause therefore, having received complete foreknowledge, they appointed the aforesaid persons (*κατέστησαν τοὺς προειρημένους*), and afterwards they provided a continuance (*καὶ μεταξὺ ἐπιμονὴν (ἐπινόμην) δεδώκασιν*), that if these should fall asleep, other approved men should succeed to their ministration. Those therefore who were apppointed by them, or afterward by other men of repute with the consent of the whole Church (*τοὺς οὖν καταστaθέντας ὑπ' ἐκείνων ἢ μεταξὺ ὑφ' ἑτέρων ἐλλογίμων ἀνδρῶν, συνευδοκησάσης τῆς ἐκκλησίας πάσης*), and have ministered unblameably to the flock of Christ in lowliness of mind, peacefully and with all modesty, and for long time have borne a good report with all—these men we consider to be unjustly thrust out from their ministration. For it will be no light sin for us, if we thrust out those who have offered the gifts of the bishop's office unblameably and holily" (ch. 44).

The text is so clear that it needs no further comment. "They (namely, the Apostles) appointed the aforesaid persons (namely, the bishops) and afterwards they provided a continuance that if these should fall asleep other approved men should succeed to their ministration." The Apostles appointed the bishops as their successors and provided that these in turn appoint other approved men to succeed themselves. "Clearly," says Marsh, "the writer has no doubt concerning the divine origin of the ministry or the necessity of preserving the apostolic succession." [38]

[38] *Op. cit.*, Vol. I, p. 219.

Baur, the most radical of critics, referring to this passage of Clement says: "It is merely a wish to give to the congregational constitution which existed in his time the sanction of apostolic authority which leads Clement to say, ch. 44, that the Apostles knew that there would be strife concerning the name of the ἐπισκοπή." [39] It is hard to see how anyone can read this meaning into the words. The context shows that Clement means the very opposite. He is admonishing the rebellious Corinthians who deposed their lawful superiors. He reminds them that these superiors have received a divine appointment, an appointment coming from Christ through the Apostles and their successors. He wishes to say, You have no right whatsoever to interfere with your ecclesiastical superiors or with their appointment. The Apostles provided for that. They appointed their successors and commissioned these to appoint other men to succeed them and so on. And for you to depose these lawfully and divinely constituted officials is no light sin. Clement "bases his principle," writes McGiffert, "not upon custom or expediency, or anything of the kind but upon the will of God. God sent forth Jesus Christ, Christ sent forth the Apostles, and they in turn appointed bishops and deacons, so that the bishops and deacons hold their office by divine right." [40]

d) No Argument for Congregational Government.

Baur allows himself to be influenced by his congregational theory. He says: "Those who had been instituted at first by the Apostles or afterwards by other *notable* men, with the approval of the whole congregation, and had blamelessly performed their service to the Lord's flock, could not, it is urged, be justly removed from their

[39] *The Church History of the First Three Centuries*, translated by Menzies, (1878-1879), Vol. II, p. 19.

[40] *History of Christianity in the Apostolic Age* (1905), p. 669-670.

ministry (their λειτουργία or as it is called directly afterwards, the ἐπισκοπή, i. e., the office of the πρεσβύτεροι). According to this, both the ἐλλόγιμοι ἄνδρες and the πᾶσα ἐκκλησία took part in the elections to the church offices. The more influential members of the congregation conducted the election and proposed the names which were accepted only if the congregation assented. Since those called 'notables' are not clerical persons, it is still the congregation with whom the right of election rests and the original conception to which these first beginnings of the whole future hierarchy lead us back is unquestionably congregational self-government.'' [41]

Baur says, the 'notables' were not clerical persons. The letter, however, does not state this. On the contrary from the whole context it is quite certain, that they *were* clerical persons, because they are placed in the same category as the Apostles and their successors. ''Those therefore,'' Clement writes, ''who were appointed by them (namely, the Apostles or the successors of the Apostles), or afterwards by other men of repute with the consent of the whole Church.'' Like the Apostles and their successors they had a right to appoint bishops.

There is nothing said of the election of ecclesiastical officials. How, then, can Baur declare that ''the more influential members of the congregation conducted the election and proposed the names which were accepted only if the congregation assented?'' Clement plainly says in several places that the bishops were *appointed.* There can be no mistake about his words. ''They (the Apostles) appointed their first fruits . . . to be bishops and deacons to them that should believe'' (ch. 42). ''They (the Apostles) appointed the aforesaid persons. Those therefore who were appointed by them'' (ch. 44). ''Καθίστανον,'' ''κατέστησαν,'' κατασταθέντας, the expressions used in the respective passages, can only mean 'appoint.'

[41] *Op. cit.*, Vol. II, p. 19.

The words "with the consent of the whole Church" are by no means an argument for community-government. For, in the first place, the several citations above show, that it was appointment by the Apostles or their legitimate successors that constituted an official of the Church.

"*With the consent of the whole Church*" is, moreover, a vague, indefinite expression. It means, perhaps, that the people selected the candidates for ecclesiastical office. In the early days of the Church this privilege was accorded some communities. There is an instance of this procedure in the Acts vi, 2-6. "Then the twelve calling together the multitude of the disciples, said: It is not reason that we should leave the word of God and serve tables. Wherefore, brethren, look ye out among you seven men of good reputation, full of the Holy Ghost and wisdom, whom we may appoint over this business. But we will give ourselves continually to prayer, and to the ministry of the word. And the saying was liked by all the multitude. And they chose Stephen, a man full of faith, and of the Holy Ghost, and Philip," etc. "These they set before the Apostles; and they praying, imposed hands upon them,—*οὓς ἔστησαν ἐνώπιον τῶν ἀποστόλων, καὶ προσευξάμενοι ἐπέθηκαν αὐτοῖς τὰς χεῖρας.*" The community at the bidding of the Apostles chose the candidates, the Apostles ordained them. It was not the selection by the community, but the appointment by the Apostles and the imposition of hands that constituted them officials of the Church.

That appointment by ecclesiastical authority was the method of instituting hierarchs in the Church is evident from Acts xiv, 22: "And when they (namely, Paul and Barnabas) had ordained (*χειροτονήσαντες*) to them priests in every church and had prayed with fasting, they commended them to the Lord, in whom they believed." He refers to this appointment again in chapter xx, 28, where he admonishes the Elders: "Take heed to yourselves

and to the whole flock, wherein the Holy Ghost hath placed (ἔθετο ἐπισκόπους) you bishops, to rule the Church of God."

In the Pastoral Letters he brings out the same fact. Writing to Timothy he says: "Neglect not the grace that is in thee, which was given thee by prophecy, with imposition of the hands of the priesthood (μετὰ ἐπιθέσεως τῶν χειρῶν τοῦ πρεσβυτερίου)."[42] "Impose not hands lightly on any man," he says in another place.[43] And again: "For which cause I admonish thee, that thou stir up the grace of God which is in thee, by the imposition of my hands."[44] To Titus he speaks in a similar strain: "For this cause I left thee in Crete, that thou shouldst set in order the things that are wanting and shouldst ordain priests (καταστήσῃς . . . πρεσβυτέρους) in every city, as I also appointed thee (διεταξάμην)."[45] Besides no mention is made in the letters of community-government.

If the community of Rome or of Corinth enjoyed self-government, it would be indicated in other parts of the letter. However, there are no indications of autonomy or complete authority of the community. The passage in chapter 54 where Clement exhorts the more noble-minded of the disturbers to give in and say: "I do that which is ordered by the people (ποιῶ τὰ προστασσόμενα ὑπὸ τοῦ πλήθους)" can hardly be taken as an argument for community-sovereignty. Amid the general disorder and revolt it is plain that not the presbyters threatened with deposition, but only the people as a whole would be able to judge the disturbers of peace. But out of this particular concrete case, one would hardly construct a general law for the whole Church.

[42] *I Tim.* iv, 14.
[43] *I Tim.* v, 22.
[44] *II Tim.* i, 6.
[45] *Tit.* i, 5.

e) The Teaching Authority of the Bishops.

It is obvious from the epistle of St. Clement, that it was not the community that was vested with authority, but the bishops, the divinely appointed successors of the Apostles. Not only were they vested with the power to rule, but they were also the divinely established teachers of the Word. St. Clement, of course, stresses their ruling power. He is dealing with a disciplinary question and it was but natural that he emphasize this point. But in bringing out their ruling authority, he also bears witness to their teaching power, for the two are intimately associated. The one is the safeguard of the other.

Moreover in chapter 42 their teaching authority is quite clearly indicated. "So preaching everywhere in country and town, they appointed their first-fruits . . . to be bishops and deacons unto them that should believe." The Apostles were charged by Christ to preach the Gospel. They appointed bishops and deacons to assist them in this work, and to continue it after their death. Like the Apostles they too were ministers of the Word. Hence, it is wrong to say that the presbyter-bishops mentioned in the Clementine letter are only administrative officials. "Their position as spiritual guides (43, 1)," as Borkowski remarks, "and successors of the Apostles manifests clearly their authoritative office of administering the Word of God." [46] They were in every sense of the word the authorized teachers of the Church.

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[46] *Loc. cit.*, Vol. VII, p. 337.

CHAPTER II.

The Didache.

1. *As a Testimony.*

The Didache is one of the oldest documents of Christian antiquity. Dr. Schaff styles it the "oldest Church Manual."[1] The Didache or Teaching of the Twelve Apostles was brought to light in 1883 A. D. by Bryennios, the Greek orthodox Metropolitan of Nicomedia. The work was found together with other treatises in the Jerusalem Codex. According to the subscription this codex was written in the year 1056 A. D. by the hand of Leo or Leon, a notary.

The title of the treatise is Διδαχὴ τῶν δώδεκα Ἀποστόλων "The Teaching of the Twelve Apostles." Bardenhewer, however, thinks that the original and complete title is the one given in the manuscript found by Bryennios: Διδαχὴ Κυρίου δία τῶν δώδεκα Ἀποστόλων τοῖς ἔθνεσιν "The Teaching of the Lord through the Twelve Apostles to the Nations."[2]

This heading suggests the purpose of the writing. It was to give in an abridged form the teaching of Jesus Christ as preached by the Apostles to the Gentiles. The work may be best characterized as an ancient Church ritual. The first ten chapters comprise liturgical precepts; the last six are of a canonical nature. These latter comprise instructions concerning the ministry and regulations for Christian worship.

The author of the Didache is not known, nor is there

[1] *The Didache* (1889, 3rd ed.), p. 1. Bardenhewer styles it, "Das älteste aller nachbiblischen Literaturdenkmäler des Christentums." *Op. cit.*, Vol. I, p. 90.

[2] *Op. cit.*, Vol. I, p. 91.

any way of ascertaining his name. Some are of the opinion that he was one of the early prophets.[3]

The place of composition is, likewise, a matter of conjecture. Some believe it was written in Egypt; others, and their opinion seems the more probable, think that it was composed in Syria or Palestine. The arguments, however, for both sides are weak. In all three places the work was held in the highest esteem. Clement of Alexandria quotes it as the word of God;[4] Athanasius recommends it to the catechumens along with some other books of the Old Testament;[5] and Eusebius enumerates it among the apocryphal works of the New Testament.[6]

A greater difficulty, and one of far more importance, is the time of composition. It has been assigned to every decade from the year 50-190 A. D. Some even put it at a later date, in spite of the fact that the work was known to Clement of Alexandria. There are only a few, however, who assign it to a period outside of the years 70-165. And within this period, the stronger evidence points to the last decades of the first century.[7] The Didache reveals a very primitive state of Church organization. The Gospel is still preached by itinerant ministers; no mention is made of a monarchical bishop; the rites of Baptism and Holy Eucharist show an early stage of development; nor

[3] Borkowski, *Catholic Encyclopedia*, Vol. VII, p. 336, says, the author was apparently a teacher or a prophet.

[4] *Strom.*, I, 20, 100.

[5] *Ep. festal.*, 39.

[6] *Hist. Eccles.*, III, 25, 4.

[7] The majority of critics seem to favor the last part of the first or, at the latest, the beginning of the second century. Thus Bardenhewer (*op. cit.*, Vol. I, p. 93) assigns it to the end of the first century; Funk, F. X., *Doctrina Duodecim Apostolorum* (1887), p. xxxi-xxxvi, between the years 80-120; Lightfoot, *Expositor*, 1885, p. 1-11, between 80-110; Schaff, *loc. cit.*, p. 119, 90-100; Zahn, *Forschungen zur Geschichte des neutestamentlichen Kanons und der altkirchlichen Literatur*, (1884), 3ter Theil, p. 304, 80-130; Batiffol, *Primitive Catholicism*, (1911), p. 105, places it in the last decades of the first century; Sanday, *Expositor*, 3rd Ser., V, p. 107, ca. 100.

is anything said of heresy. All this points to the first rather than to the second century. As Dr. Lightfoot remarks, "the archaic simplicity of its practical suggestions is only consistent with the early infancy of the Church."[8]

Even Prof. Harnack recognizes this primitive state of affairs. Without doubt, he says, the Didache manifests a number of marks, which, according to our former knowledge of things, agrees better with the period 80-120 than 120-160. What it says, for example, about the apostles, prophets and teachers, is, compared with Clement, Polycarp, Hermas, Justin, to say nothing of Ignatius, much older, and has to be placed near the Pauline time.[9]

But, notwithstanding, Harnack sees reasons, which he believes, warrant a date as late as 135-160. He says, there are indications in the Didache, which show that several generations have already passed away. 1. Corruption has broken out among the apostles and prophets. 2. The prestige of the prophets is on the decline. 3. The text (in the "Two Ways," ch. 1) shows certain modifications of the evangelical demands, and in the appendage to the same (ch. 6), distinguishes a higher and a lower morality. 4. The insistance on the offering of the first-fruits, of a fixed order for prayer and fasting in a pagan-Gentile territory is the sign of a later time. 5. What the author says about the bishops and deacons, namely, that they perform the service of the prophets and teachers and are to be honored along with these, cannot be the original status.[10] However, the greater number of critics

[8] *The Apostlic Fathers*, (1912), p. 216.

[9] *Realencyklopädie f. prot. Theol. u. Kirche* (1896), I. Bd., p. 721-722: "Unzweifelhaft zeigt sie (Didache) eine Reihe von Merkmalen, die nach unserer bisherigen Kenntnis der Dinge sich besser in die Zeit zwischen 80-120, als zwischen 120-160 fügen. Was sie z. B. über Apostel, Propheten und Lehrer sagt, ist gemessen an Clemens, Polycarp, Hermas, Justin—von Ignatius zu schweigen—vielaltümlicher und hat seine Stelle nahe bei der paulinschen Zeit zu erhalten."

[10] *Realencyklopädie f. prot. Theol. u. Kirche*, I. Bd., p. 721-722. Harnack gives several other reasons, but the abovementioned are the more impor-

do not consider Harnack's reasons for a late date weighty enough to offset the arguments in favor of an earlier period.

There can be no doubt that the Didache is an important work, and that it furnishes useful information on the history of the primitive Church. But the work is shrouded in no little obscurity. It is difficult, therefore, to understand how some critics can attach undue importance to it. Yet some have made it the foundation for their theories on the origin of Church-organization. They think, they find in it evidence of absolute certainty.

Harnack, for instance, believes the recovery of the Didache the most important find of the last epoch, since it gives the solution for the origin of the Catholic hierarchy.[11] Sanday calls it the "master-key" which alone fits all the wards of the historical problem.[12] Harris says, it contains "the missing links." "It has bridged the chasm between the Synagogue and the Church, between the Presbyterate and the Episcopate, between the Jew and the Christian and between the Christian and the Montanist."[13]

It is on the Didache that Harnack builds up his combination-theory, a theory, which discredits the divine origin of the episcopacy, makes its teaching authority the necessary outcome of circumstances, and stamps the apostolic succession, that great guarantee of ecclesiastical authority, as the invention of ambitious bishops. Harnack thus undermines the very foundation of the Catholic rule of faith.

tant ones. München in his article "*Die Lehre der Zwölf Apostel*" in the *Zeitschrift für katholische Theologie*, (1886), p. 629-676 has refuted in detail Harnack's arguments.

[11] *Die Lehre der Zwölf Apostel*, in *Texte und Untersuchungen*, (1893), II. Bd., p. 141.

[12] *Expositor*, 3rd Ser., Vol. 5, p. 106.

[13] *Expositor*, 3rd Ser., Vol. 5, p. 226.

2. *Rule of Faith in the Didache.*

Although Protestant critics have made much of the Didache, still it is noteworthy that they can find no evidence in it for their rule of faith. Nothing is more foreign to the author of the Didache than private interpretation. Nor does he give the slightest suggestion that Scripture is the sole standard of belief. Non-Catholic critics seem to overlook this point. Yet it is an important bit of evidence against them.

On the other hand we find testimony in favor of the Catholic viewpoint. The whole work is in fact an argument for the Catholic rule of faith. The purpose of the writer is to give the teaching of the twelve Apostles, and not the religious views of any and every teacher. He gives the apostolic doctrine at some length. Then he warns the faithful against false teachers. He wants to preclude private interpretations. Therefore, he bids the Christians receive only those who teach the doctrine inculcated in the Didache, in other words, the apostolic doctrine, and reject those who teach a contrary doctrine. "Whosoever therefore shall come and teach you all these things that have been said before, receive him; but if the teacher himself be perverted and teach a different doctrine to the destruction thereof, hear him not; but if to the increase of righteousness and the knowledge of the Lord, receive him as the Lord" (ch. 11).

So solicitous is the author on this point, that he even gives minute instructions according to which they may know the true from the false prophet and teacher. "But concerning the apostles and prophets, so do ye according to the ordinance of the Gospel. Let every apostle, when he cometh to you, be received as the Lord; but he shall not abide more than a single day, or if there be need a second likewise; but if he abide three days, he is a false prophet. And when he departeth, let the apostle receive nothing save bread, until he findeth shelter; but if he ask money,

he is a false prophet. And any prophet speaking in the Spirit ye shall not try neither discern; for every sin shall be forgiven, but this sin shall not be forgiven. Yet not every one that speaketh in the Spirit is a prophet, but only if he have the ways of the Lord. From his ways therefore the false prophet and the prophet shall be recognized. And no prophet when he ordereth a table in the Spirit shall eat of it; otherwise he is a false prophet. And every prophet teaching the truth, if he doeth not what he teacheth, is a false prophet. And every prophet approved and found true, if he doeth ought as an outward mystery typical of the Church, and yet teacheth you not to do all that he himself doeth, shall not be judged before you; he hath his judgment in the presence of God; for in like manner also did the prophets of old time. And whosoever shall say in the Spirit, Give me silver or anything else, ye shall not listen to him; but if he tell you to give on behalf of others that are in want, let no man judge him'' (ch. 11).

Do not these words imply that the travelling ministers were subject to a higher authority? The author lays down very minute rules controlling their doctrine and their conduct. They were not free to propound whatsoever teaching they chose, nor were they at liberty to propagate their own private theories and speculations. They had to teach the doctrine handed down by the Apostles, and the faithful had a definite norm by which they might know whether or not the itinerant preachers were doing so.

These rules for the travelling ministers, strange as they may seem to us, were necessary in those days. The early missionaries after the manner of the Twelve went from place to place proclaiming the glad tidings. False teachers crept in among them. These, under the guise of truth and eager to spread their insidious teaching and at the same time obtain a comfortable livelihood, tried to pose as true prophets. How were the infant communities just initiated into the faith to know the true from the false?

A safeguard was needed for the faithful. This safeguard is found in the rules of the Didache.

According to these rules, if the evangelists are found to be true preachers of the Word, they are to be received as the Lord himself and to be accorded the means of support during their sojourn in the various communities. "But every true prophet desiring to settle among you *is worthy of his food.* In like manner a true teacher *is* also *worthy,* like *the workman, of his food.* Every firstfruit then of the produce of the wine-vat and of the threshing-floor, of thy oxen and of thy sheep, thou shalt take and give as the firstfruit to the prophets; for they are your chief-priests. But if ye have not a prophet, give them to the poor. If thou makest bread, take the firstfruit and give according to the commandment. In like manner, when thou openest a jar of wine or of oil, take the first-fruit and give to the prophets; yea and of money and raiment and every possession take the firstfruit, as shall seem good to thee, and give according to the command-ment" (ch. 13).

Harnack and some others are inclined to exaggerate the prominence of the early itinerant preachers.[14] All that can be concluded from the Didache, however, is that the apostles, prophets and teachers were ministers of the Word, that they were to be honored and that they were to receive their support.

The teaching authority of the bishops is referred to in chapter 15: "Appoint for yourselves therefore bishops and deacons worthy of the Lord, men who are meek and not lovers of money, and true and approved; for unto you they also perform the service of the prophets and teach-ers. Therefore despise them not; for they are your

[14] Cfr. *op. cit.*, p. 103 ff.: Harnack maintains that the travelling preachers were the only officials in the Church (the bishops and deacons were community-officials), that they held the highest position, that they had the exclusive right to preach the Word of God, that this prerogative was based on a divine mandate or at least on a charisma.

honorable men along with the prophets and teachers.''[15] Like the prophets and teachers the bishops and deacons are ministers of the Word, and they are to be honored as such.

Protestant critics make much of this passage. They see in it evidence against the divine authority of the bishops and an argument for the democratic form of government. Harnack, for instance, says that in all the early Christian literature there is not another passage so important for the historical origin of the Catholic episcopate.[16] Here is furnished the brightest light for an understanding of the oldest history of the constitution of the Church, and in this light all the factors of early Church history receive a new signification.[17]

The conclusions, he draws from it, may be summed up in the following sentence: In as much as the Didache directs the community: *χειροτονήσατε ἑαυτοῖς ἐπισκόπους καὶ διακόνους*, it shows that these magistrates are community-officials, men chosen by the community; in as far as it demands such qualities as meekness and disinterestedness, it characterizes them as administrative officials; and in as far as it derives their special claim to honor from a new function which it confers upon them, it shows that these, in their capacity of administrative officials of the community, were not over the community, but on an equal footing with it.[18] Harnack thus destroys

[15] *χειροτονήσατε οὖν ἑαυτοῖς ἐπισκόπους καὶ διακόνους ἀξίους τοῦ Κυρίου, ἄνδρας πραεῖς καὶ ἀφιλαργύρους καὶ ἀληθεῖς καὶ δεδοκιμασμένους· ὑμῖν γὰρ λειτουργοῦσι καὶ αὐτοὶ, τὴν λειτουργίαν τῶν προφητῶν καὶ διδασκάλων. Μὴ οὖν ὑπερίδητε αὐτούς· αὐτοὶ γάρ εἰσιν οἱ τετιμημένοι ὑμῶν μετὰ τῶν προφητῶν καὶ διδασκάλων.*

[16] *Lehre der Zwölf Apostel*, p. 141: "Ja man darf geradezu behaupten, dass es in der gesammten urchristlichen Literatur keine zweite Stelle giebt, die für die Entstehungsgeschichte des katholischen Episkopats so wichtig ist wie die unsrige."

[17] *Lehre der Zwölf Apostel*, p. 145: "Damit ist der Punkt gegeben, an welchem aus der Διδαχη das hellste Licht zur Erkenntniss der ältesten Geschichte der Verfassung der Kirche einströmt. In diesem Lichte gewinnen alle Factoren dieser Geschichte eine neue Bedeutung."

[18] *Ibid.*: "Indem sie sich an die ganze Gemeinde mit der Anweisung

the divine authority of the bishops, robs them of their teaching authority, makes them primarily administrative officials, cuts off the apostolic succession, that great guarantee of authority, and thereby undermines the Catholic rule of faith.

a) The Bishops and Deacons not Community-Officials.

The words "Appoint for yourselves therefore bishops and deacons" seem, it is true, to bestow a certain prerogative upon the community. But, as Borkowski remarks: "Since the electoral proceedings are not given in detail, we cannot make a definite statement about the authority vested in the community."[19] Probably there is here a reference to that privilege of which we spoke in the chapter on St. Clement. The people, perhaps, had the right to select the candidates for office. These, then, were presented to the ecclesiastical authority for approval and ordination. "The writer," as Moran points out, "here omits mention of this ceremony, not because it was unknown to him, but because the Didache is a manual for the faithful. Now the faithful did not impose hands; they merely elected and presented the candidates as in the case of the seven at Jerusalem. Hence the author contents himself with exhorting them to select suitable candidates."[20] When one remembers that the Didache represents a very primitive state of affairs and deals with very unsettled conditions, and that the Church was still in its infancy and was rapidly expanding and developing, one

wendet: χειροτονήσατε ἑαυτοῖς ἐπισκόπους καὶ διακόνους, zeigt sie, dass diese Beamten Gemeindeamte sind, die von der Gemeinde bestellt werden; indem sie als Qualitäten für dieselben Sanftmuth und Freiheit von Geldgier verlangt, characterisirt sie als Verwaltungsbeamte, und indem sie den besonderen Anspruch auf Ehre für dieselben aus einer neuen function, die sie ihnen beilegt, ableitet, zeigt sie, dass jene Beamten in ihrer Eigenschaft als Verwaltungsbeamte der Gemeinde nicht über-, sondern gleichgeordnet waren."

[19] *Catholic Encyclopedia*, Vol. VII, p. 336.

[20] *Op. cit.*, p. 154, note. Cfr. also Funk, *op. cit.*

naturally expects that the communities would enjoy special privileges. But no fair-minded critic would deduce from this fact a universally adopted form of democratic Church government.

If, as Harnack maintains, the communities did really constitute their own bishops and deacons, then assuredly they were only community-officials, they were only administrative officials, for no community can constitute any member an official of the Church. A higher ecclesiastical power is required for that. Furthermore, supposing that the communities did empower their own bishops and deacons, would it follow that this practice was the universal norm in the Church? By no means. It would simply show that the communities, to which the Didache is addressed, appointed their own overseers; it would show that a community, or a few communities at the most, in a very primitive state in the backwoods of Christianity selected their own officials. Evidence of a dubious writing, such as the Didache, would never warrant a conclusion that goes against an old tradition of the Church and contradicts the testimony of more reliable sources. With Professor Gore one naturally prefers "to look at so questionable a writing as the Didache in the light of apostolic practice and injunction."[21]

b) The Bishops and Deacons not primarily Administrative Officials.

Nor is it true that the bishops and deacons were originally and primarily administrative officials. According to Harnack the bishops were *oeconomi.* They had charge of the finances and were dispensers of the Church goods. Harnack takes this idea from Hatch, and gives it a somewhat broader signification. His argument for this statement is taken from the words: "Appoint for yourselves therefore bishops and deacons worthy of the Lord, *men*

[21] *Op. cit.*, p. 281.

who are meek and not lovers of money.''[22] The argument, however, has little force. Meekness is a requisite for everyone in authority. It is not an attribute peculiar to an administrative official. And if disinterestedness is a qualification of an administrative officer, then Harnack, to be consistent, would have to say that the apostles, prophets and teachers were administrative officials, because the Didache demands the same virtue of them. ''And when he departeth let the apostle receive nothing save bread, until he findeth shelter; but if he ask money he is a false prophet . . . And no prophet when he ordereth a table in the Spirit shall eat of it; otherwise he is a false prophet . . . And whosoever shall say in the Spirit, Give me silver or anything else, ye shall not listen to him'' (ch. 11). In view of this testimony does it not seem more likely that disinterestedness is rather a precaution against false doctrine than a qualification for an administrative function?

St. Paul, we know, looks upon covetousness as the sign of a false prophet or teacher. Writing to Titus he enumerates the qualities of a bishop, and then warns him against seducers in these words: ''For there are also many disobedient, vain talkers, and seducers; especially they who are of the circumcision. Who must be reproved, who subvert whole houses, teaching things which they ought not, *for filthy lucre's sake.*''[23] If greed is the sign of a false teacher, is it not more in keeping with the evidence to argue that lack of greed is the sign of a true teacher?

Even if one admits that the words ''meek'' and ''not lovers of money'' do refer to administrative power, one is not warranted in concluding that the bishops and deacons were originally and primarily financial administrators or *oeconomi.* The most one can conclude is, that the bishops and deacons had administrative power along with

[22] *Op. cit.*, p. 141.
[23] Tit. i, 10-11.

their other functions. Administration did not constitute the principal part of the bishop's office. According to the testimony of Justin the offerings were deposited with the bishop who distributed them to the needy.[24] The offerings, however, did not constitute the principal part of the ecclesiastical assembly, hence neither did the distribution of the alms constitute the principal part of the bishop's office.[25]

c) The Bishops and Deacons not Dependent upon the Apostles, Prophets and Teachers of the Didache for their Teaching Authority.

According to Harnack the first mention of the bishops and deacons as ministers of the Word appears in the Didache. They became substitutes for the apostles, prophets and teachers, as the latter grew more and more scarce. When the bishops (and deacons) stepped into the position of teachers, he says, they not only acquired the extraordinary importance which the professional preachers enjoyed, but the character of their office as well necessarily appeared in a new light. To be teachers, to be by profession preachers and guardians of the Gospel was no community-office. It was a divine commission, in the performance of which, one was not a servant of an individual community, but a servant of the Church. Thus the episcopate was put on a line of Catholic development. The bishops were recognized as those who performed the service of the prophets, teachers and apostles.

Thus the administrative officials, according to Harnack, rose step by step to the head of the community, a position, which the professional teachers of Christianity had held from the beginning by virtue of their divine institution. It lay, he says, in the very nature of the administrative

[24] *Apologia*, I, 67: "Qui abundant et volunt, suo arbitrio, quod quisque vult, largiunt ut, et quod colligitur apud eum, qui preest, deponitur, ac ipse subvenit pupillis et viduis," etc.

[25] Cfr. Funk, *Doctrina* 12 *Apostolorum* (1887), p. 44.

and patriarchal office, that the same should gradually absorb and acquire the office of preaching.[26]

There is no foundation for these conclusions in the Didache. All that one can deduce from the words: "for they also perform the service of prophets and teachers," is that the bishops along with the prophets and teachers had the right to preach the Gospel. And as ministers of the Word they were to be honored. "Therefore despise them not; for they are your honorable men along with the prophets and teachers."

The Pastoral Letters[27] clearly indicate, that the teaching office belonged to the bishops from the very beginning. To Timothy St. Paul writes: "Take heed to thyself and to doctrine; be earnest in them. For in doing this thou shalt both save thyself and them that hear thee."[28] Again he says: "Till I come attend unto reading, to exhortation and to doctrine."[29] After giving him instructions for the faithful St. Paul tells him: "These things teach and

[26] *Lehre der Zwölf Apostel*, p. 153: "Indem die Bishöfe (und Diakonen) aber in die Stellung von Lehrern einrückten, kam ihnen nicht nur das ausserordentliche Ansehen zu gut, welches jene berufsmässigen Prediger genossen, sondern in dem Momente musste auch die Natur ihres Amtes in einem neuen Lichte erscheinen. Lehrer zu sein, das Evangelium, resp. die 'gesunde Lehre' von Berufs wegen zu verkündigen und zu wahren, das war ja kein Gemeindeamt, sondern ein göttlicher Auftrag, in dessen Ausführung man nicht Diener einer Einzelgemeinde, sondern Diener der Kirche war. Der Episkopat wurde auf die Linie seiner katholischen Entwicklung gestellt, indem die Inhaber desselben als solche anerkannt wurden, die auch den Dienst der Propheten und Lehrer, letztlich auch den der Apostel, leisten. Die Inhaber des administrativen Amtes stiegen so schrittweise zu der Höhe über der Gemeinde hinauf, welche die berufsmässigen Lehrer der Christenheit kraft göttlicher Einsetzung von Anfang an behauptet hatten. . . . Erstlich lag es in der Natur des administrativen und patriarchalischen Amtes, dass dasselbe nach und nach auch den Dienst am Wort Anderen entzog und in sich hineinzog. . . ."

[27] These Letters, according to Catholic and conservative Protestant scholars, were written by St. Paul between the years 64-66. Cfr. Schumacher, *Handbook of Scripture Study*, Vol. III, 217 ff.

[28] I Tim. iv, 16.

[29] I Tim. iv, 13.

exhort."[30] And he concludes his first epistle to Timothy with the words: "O Timothy, keep that which is committed to thy trust, avoiding the profane novelties of words and oppositions of knowledge falsely so-called."[31] In his second Epistle to Timothy St. Paul is still more explicit on this point. He says: "Be not thou therefore ashamed of the testimony of our Lord, nor of me his prisoner; but labor with the gospel according to the power of God."[32] Again he writes: "Hold the form of sound words which thou hast heard of me in faith, and in the love which is in Christ Jesus."[33] And again: "The things which thou hast heard of me by many witnesses, the same commend to faithful men, who shall be fit to teach others also."[34] In chapter IV, 1-3, he says: "I charge thee, before God and Jesus Christ, who shall judge the living and the dead, by his coming and his kingdom; preach the word, be instant in season, out of season; reprove, entreat, rebuke in all patience and doctrine. For there shall be a time when they will not endure sound doctrine; but, according to their own desires, they will heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears," etc.

In the Epistle to Titus the teaching authority of the bishop is equally clear. When St. Paul is enumerating the requisites of a bishop he stresses this particular point. "For a bishop," he writes, "must be without crime, as the steward of God: not proud, not subject to anger, not given to wine, no striker, not greedy of filthy lucre: but given to hospitality, gentle, sober, just, holy, continent; embracing that faithful word which is according to doctrine, that he may be able to exhort in sound doctrine, and to convince the gainsayers."[35] Again he says: "Speak thou the things that become sound doctrine."[36] And he adds: "In all things show thyself an

[30] I Tim. vi, 2.
[31] I Tim. vi, 20-21.
[32] II Tim. i, 8.
[33] II Tim. i, 13.
[34] II Tim. ii, 2.
[35] Tit. i, 7-9.
[36] Tit. ii, 1.

example of good works, in doctrine, in integrity, in gravity. The sound word that cannot be blamed."[37] "These things speak, and exhort and rebuke with all authority."[38] Furthermore, he bids Titus in teaching to " avoid foolish questions, and genealogies, and contentions, and strivings about the law. For they are unprofitable and vain."[39]

There is no reason to suppose that the bishops have lately acquired their teaching authority. The author of the Didache does not give the slightest hint that the overseers are encroaching on the domain of the prophets, or that he is conscious of passing through a transition period. A writer, who esteemed so highly the prophetic ministry, would be the first to notice the encroachment of the overseers, and instead of praising would censure them. "If on the other hand," as Moran remarks, "the writer of the Didache was himself under the influence of the supposed pro-hierarchical tendency, he would have betrayed himself by keeping the prophets in the background, and pushing forward the overseers; yet this is precisely what he has not done." [40] Besides such a radical change in the constitution of the Church could not have taken place without arousing comment and controversy. Yet there is no trace of controversy on this point. Church history mentions no violent or abrupt change or usurpation in the form of Church government. Hence it is entirely wrong to adduce the testimony of the Didache as an argument against the teaching authority of the bishops.

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[37] Tit. ii, 6-8.
[38] Tit. ii, 15.
[39] Tit. iii, 9.
[40] *Op. cit.*, p. 109.

CHAPTER III.

St. Ignatius of Antioch.

1. *As a Witness to the Rule of Faith.*

Ignatius of Antioch is even a more valuable witness for the rule of faith than Clement of Rome. St. Ignatius was one of the early bishops of Antioch. According to Origen[1] and Eusebius[2] he was the second, or if we include St. Peter, the third of the Antiochene bishops, the successor of Evodius. St. John Chrysostom in his panegyric on the Saint supposes that Ignatius knew the Apostles and received ordination from them,[3] and Theodoret describes him as "having received the grace of the high-priesthood at the hand of the great Peter."[4] The Apostolic Constitution states that he was ordained by St. Paul.[5] A later tradition regards him as a disciple of St. John. The Martyrium Colbertinum calls him the disciple of the Apostle John, and St. Jerome in his revised version of the Chronicon of Eusebius names Ignatius as the disciple of the beloved Apostle along with Papias and Polycarp. Eusebius, however, does not mention the fact in the original work, so not much weight can be attached to the testimony. Nevertheless it seems almost certain that Ignatius was an apostolic man in the real sense of the word. Most probably he received ordination from one of the Apostles. Funk thinks it probable that he had seen Peter or Paul in his youth.[6]

It was while in the discharge of his duties as bishop of Antioch that Ignatius was taken prisoner and sent to

[1] *In Luc. hom.*, VI.
[2] *Hist. Eccles.*, III, 22.
[3] *In S. Martyrem Ignatium*, 1 and 2.
[4] *Ep.*, 151.
[5] VII, 46.
[6] *Opera Patrum Apostolicorum*, (1887), Vol. I, p. xlv.

Rome under a guard of soldiers to be martyred in the amphitheatre. On the way they took him to Smyrna, where he was hospitably treated by Polycarp and the Christians of that community. During his sojourn there he was visited by delegates from the Christian Churches in the neighboring cities of Ephesus, Magnesia and Tralles. In return for their kindness the holy bishop addressed a letter to each of these Churches. At the same time he sent a letter to the Romans asking them, not to hinder him "from attaining unto God." His next stopping place was Troas. Here Ignatius wrote three more letters,—to the Philadelphians, to the Smyrnians and to Polycarp.

The holy Bishop's one desire was to be "ground fine as wheat-flour for the sacrificial offering."[7] His wish was gratified on his arrival at Rome. He was torn to pieces by the wild beasts of the amphitheatre. His martyrdom, according to Eusebius, occurred sometime in the reign of Trajan (98-117).[8] The exact date cannot be given, but critics place it between the years 107 or 110 and 117. Harnack puts it later,—about the year 130 A. D. There is no evidence, however, for so late a date.

Ignatius is a noteworthy witness for the discipline and doctrine of the early Church. From contact with some of the Apostles he had learned the apostolic doctrine at its very source, and thus was competent to bear witness to it. Moreover, he was one of the early bishops of the great Church of Antioch. Were he not an apostolic man, and a true exponent of the apostolic teaching, he could never have held so prominent a place and have been so revered and loved by the early Christians. He was likewise the friend of the faithful Polycarp. This fact alone speaks for him. Polycarp, the firm adherent of everything apostolic, who abhorred every contrary doctrine, would

[7] *Ep. to the Rom.*, ch. 4.
[8] *Chron. post. an. Abr.*, 2123.

never have entered on such friendly relations with Ignatius, were he not a teacher after his own heart and mind.

The delegates from the neighboring Churches likewise testify to the apostolic spirit of Ignatius. They come to visit the Saint on his way to martyrdom, in order to receive counsel and edification. They see in him the very embodiment of apostolic truth and courage. Finally his martyrdom itself is a beautiful tribute to his apostolic spirit. Ignatius will die rather than swerve in the least from the teaching he has learned from the Apostles. So convinced is he of its truth, so full of zeal for the glory of God, so eager to imitate the Apostles before him, that he accounts it an honor to die for the love of God and in defence of the truth. The glory of the martyr thus enhances the more the teaching of the doctor. As Lightfoot remarks: "His teaching on matters of theological truth and ecclesiastical order was barbed and fledged by the fame of his constancy in that supreme trial of faith."[9]

2. *The Ignatian Question.*

The Ignatian Letters have come down to us in three groups, the Long, the Middle and the Short Group. The Long Group contains thirteen letters, namely: 1) Maria of Cassabola to Ignatius, 2) Ignatius to Maria, 3) to the Trallians, 4) to the Magnesians, 5) to the Tarsenians, 6) to the Philippians, 7) to the Philadelphians, 8) to the Smyrnians, 9) to Polycarp, 10) to the Antiochians, 11) to Hero, 12) to the Ephesians, 13) to the Romans. Of these letters Eusebius ascribes only seven to Ignatius; namely, the letter to the Ephesians, to the Magnesians, to the Trallians, to the Romans, to the Philadelphians, to the Smyrnians and to Polycarp.[10] This Long Group of letters was the first to be published. They appeared in

[9] *Apostolic Fathers*, Part II, Vol. I, p. 39.
[10] *Hist. Eccles.*, III, 36, 4.

Latin in 1498 A. D., and shortly afterwards in Greek. Being a strong defence of the episcopacy, they were rejected by Calvinistic Protestants, who saw in them a repudiation of their own congregational system. Scholars, too, soon noticed that they differed from the quotations cited by the Fathers. This gave rise to the opinion that the epistles were interpolated by a later hand. Scultetus, one of the Reformed theologians, maintained this viewpoint in his work *Medulla theologiae Patrum,* Ambergæ (1598 A. D.). His claims were verified shortly after by the discovery of another group of Ignatian Letters in a shorter form, corresponding to the seven letters mentioned by Eusebius. These were recognized by the majority of scholars as the genuine Ignatian Epistles. The controversy, however, was not ended.

In 1666 A. D. the Calvinist scholar, Daillé, came out with a work in which he denied the Ignatian authorship, and branded the letters as an interpolation of a later period.[11] He was ably refuted by the Anglican Pearson in his *Vindiciæ Ignatianæ.*[12] Pearson proved that the letters in the shorter form were the real, genuine works of Ignatius.

In the nineteenth century the epistles were again called in question by Dr. Cureton, and the controversy was renewed. Cureton discovered another group of letters in the Syriac. This group contained three of the Ignatian Letters in a still shorter form,—the epistle to the Ephesians, to the Romans and to Polycarp. These were published by Cureton in 1845 A. D. He attempted to prove that these letters were the only genuine ones, but Zahn,[13] Funk,[14] and Lightfoot[15] have shown that his thesis is

[11] *De scriptis quae sub Dionysii Arcop. et Ignatii Antioch. nominibus circumferuntur,* 1666.

[12] 1672 A. D.

[13] *Ignatius von Antiochien,* 1873.

[14] *Die Echtheit der ignatianischen Briefe,* 1883.

[15] *Apostolic Fathers,* Part II.

untenable. They found the three Syriac Letters to be only an abridgment of the longer form. At the same time they have proven beyond doubt that the seven epistles of the Middle Recension are the real, genuine works of Ignatius.[16] Now practically all critics, Harnack included, admit that these seven epistles are the authentic works of the Saint. Difficulties naturally exist, remarks Knopf, but they are not to be weighed against the uninventable form of these writings, the originality of the man which seems to speak forth from the pulsing lines, and the wealth of personal references which intersperse the letters.[17]

3. *Authenticity.*

That St. Ignatius was the author of the letters is established by the strongest testimony. Polycarp, the friend of Ignatius, expressly refers to them in his epistle to the Philippians. He informs the Philippians that in compliance with their request he forwards to them "the letters of Ignatius, which were sent by him to us, together with others, which we had in our possession (*τὰς ἐπιστολὰς Ἰγνατίου τὰς πεμφθείσας ἡμῖν ὑπ' αὐτοῦ καὶ ἄλλας ὅσας εἴχομεν παρ' ἡμῖν*).[18] These, Polycarp says, are subjoined to his own letter; and he recommends them to the Philippians as a means of edification, "for they comprise faith and endurance and every kind of edification which pertaineth unto our Lord" (ch. 13) These words are quite decisive; in fact so much so that the opponents of the Ignatian Epistles feel compelled to reject Polycarp's Epistle as a forgery, or to reject this passage as an interpolation.

[16] Cfr. also Rackl, *Die Christologie des heiligen Ignatius von Antiochien*, (1914).

[17] *Das nachapostolische Zeitalter*, (1905), p. 37.

[18] Ch. 13: "The letters of Ignatius which were sent to us by him, and others as many as we had by us we send unto you, according as ye gave charge; the which are subjoined to this letter; from which ye will be able to gain great advantage."

Another direct witness to the letters is Irenaeus. Writing fifty to eighty years afterwards (ca. 175-190 A. D.) he cites the epistle to the Romans 4, 1.[19] "As one of our people said when condemned to wild beasts, I am the wheat of God, and am ground by the teeth of wild beasts, that I may be found pure bread." That this reference is taken from Ignatius no one can deny.

Eusebius, as we have already seen, enumerates the seven epistles in order and expressly says, they were written by Ignatius on his way to martyrdom.[20]

4. *The Rule of Faith in the Ignatian Letters.*

The valiant Bishop of Antioch is on his way to death. He has but a short time in which to give his last message to his fellow-Christians and to tell them what he deems of the utmost importance for them. His message centers around two points, the contagion of heresy and the proper safeguard against it. It is a scathing repudiation of heresy and a vehement appeal for union with and submission to the bishops. Thus Ignatius bears witness to the teaching authority of the Church in a twofold way. He brands all doctrines outside of the apostolic doctrine as false and insists on obedience to the bishops as the means of preserving this doctrine.

a) Heresy Denounced.

Ignatius denounces heresy in the strongest terms. Any departure from the apostolic doctrine is hateful to him. In his epistle to the Ephesians he writes: "Now Onesimus of his own accord highly praiseth your orderly conduct in God, for that ye all live according to truth, and that no heresy hath a home among you: nay ye do not so much as listen to any one if he speak of aught else save concerning Jesus Christ in truth." "For some are

[19] *Adv. Haer.*, V, 28, 4.
[20] *Hist. eccles.*, III, 36.

wont of malicious guile to hawk about the Name, while they do certain other things unworthy of God. These men ye ought to shun, as wild beasts; for they are mad dogs, biting by stealth; against whom ye ought to be on your guard, for they are hard to heal. There is one only physician of flesh and of spirit, generate and ingenerate, God in man, true Life in death, Son of Mary and Son of God, first passible and then impassible, Jesus Christ our Lord'' (ch. 6-7). Ignatius praises the Ephesians because they live according to truth. Truth in the eyes of the holy Bishop is the apostolic doctrine. He rejoices that no heresy has a home among them. Yet he scents danger. He knows that false teachers are going about teaching a doctrine different from the apostolic doctrine, a doctrine that is not true. Hence the warning: ''These men ye ought to shun as wild beasts for they are mad dogs.'' Those, therefore, teaching a doctrine different from that of Christ and the Apostles, in other words, heretics, are in the eyes of Ignatius like mad dogs. They bite by stealth and their bite is poisonous. They sow their insidious doctrine by deceitful means.

Ignatius addresses the Trallians in similar terms. Here heresy is a poisonous herbage. ''I exhort you, therefore—yet not I, but the love of Jesus Christ — take ye only Christian food, and abstain from strange herbage, which is heresy: for these men do even mingle poison with Jesus Christ, imposing upon others by a show of honesty, like persons administering a deadly drug with honied wine, so that one who knoweth it not, fearing nothing, drinketh in death with a baneful delight'' (ch. 6). We all know how carefully one avoids poisonous food of whatsoever kind. With the same zeal, Ignatius tells the Trallians, they should avoid heretics, namely, those who ''mingle poison with Jesus Christ'' and ''persons administering a deadly drug with honied wine.'' The true apostolic doctrine is good, wholesome Christian food; heresy, the private interpretations of false teachers, is

poisonous herbage. The conclusion is clear. The faithful should eat the one and beware of the other. In his epistle to the Philadelphians he uses the same figure of speech. "Abstain from noxious herbs, which are not the husbandry of Jesus Christ, because they are not the planting of the Father" (ch. 3). Therefore, he exhorts the faithful to "shun those vile offshoots that gender a deadly fruit, whereof if a man taste, forthwith he dieth." "For these men," he says, "are not of the Father's planting: for if they had been, they would have been seen to be branches of the Cross, and their fruit imperishable—the Cross whereby He, through His passion, inviteth us, being His members. Now it cannot be that a head should be found without members, seeing that God promiseth union, and this union is Himself" (Tral., ch. 11).

Moreover, he tells the Philadelphians that he considers anyone who speaks not of Jesus Christ as little better than an empty sepulchre. "But if anyone propound Judaism unto you, hear him not: for it is better to hear Christianity from a man who is circumcised than Judaism from one uncircumcised. But if either the one or the other speak not concerning Jesus Christ, I look on them as tombstones and graves of the dead, whereon are inscribed only the names of men. Shun ye, therefore, the wicked arts and plottings of the prince of this world, lest haply ye be crushed by his devices, and wax weak in your love. But assemble yourselves all together with undivided heart" (ch. 6). Those, therefore, who do not preach Jesus Christ and His doctrine, but a contrary doctrine, are absolutely condemned. They are full of corruption. These the faithful must shun as minions of the Evil One. Against such men they must be constantly on their guard, lest they be deceived by the "wicked arts and plottings of the Prince of this world," and thus be crushed by his devices and consequently robbed of their Christian heritage.

In his letter to the Magnesians, Ignatius speaks of two

coinages, "the one of God, the other of the world." "Each of them hath its proper stamp impressed upon it, the unbelievers the stamp of this world, but the faithful in love the stamp of God the Father through Jesus Christ, through whom unless of our own free choice we accept to die unto His passion, His life is not in us" (ch. 5). Hence according to Ignatius only those that believe in Jesus Christ and His doctrine have the stamp of God. "Be not seduced by strange doctrines," he admonishes them, therefore, "nor by antiquated fables which are profitless" (ch. 8). The latter is the coinage of the world, the vain interpretations and speculations of individuals.

Writing to the Smyrnians, he calls the teachers of false doctrine the advocates of death. "But certain persons ignorantly deny Him, or rather have been denied by Him, being advocates of death rather than of truth" (ch. 5). The holy Bishop wishes to say that heretics by teaching their false doctrines are sowing the seeds of spiritual death, for heresy leads to everlasting death. So odious, in fact, are heretics in his eyes that he does not deem it fit even to mention their names. "But their names, being unbelievers, I have not thought fit to record in writing." Nay, he even wishes he could forget them. "Far be it from me even to remember them, until they repent and return to the passion which is our resurrection" (ch. 5).

How beautifully, too, he encourages Polycarp, "the immovable rock." "Let not those that seem to be plausible and yet teach strange doctrine dismay thee. Stand thou firm, as an anvil when it is smitten. It is the part of a great athlete to receive blows and be victorious. But especially must we for God's sake endure all things, that He also may endure us" (ch. 3). Polycarp must not only be able to teach others the true doctrine and exhort them to salvation, but he must be willing to suffer for it. He must be an anvil that is smitten, a victorious athlete that can receive blows and still conquer.

In these and similar terms the Bishop of Antioch reveals his abhorrence of heresy. In his mind the doctrine handed down by the Apostles is so sacred, so true and so necessary, that he can not brook the slightest deviation from it. To him advocates of other doctrines are wild beasts bent upon destruction, mad dogs whose bite is poisonous, noxious herbs whose drink is death, tombstones and graves of the dead whose breath is corruption. This hatred of heretics and this abhorrence of heresy brings out in bold relief the saintly martyr's love and zeal for the one true apostolic doctrine. It is, indeed, a repudiation and a refutation of the theory of private interpretation. Nothing is further from the mind of Ignatius than private judgment in religious matters. It is this very private judgment which he abhors and denounces so vehemently. The heretics were interpreting the apostolic teaching according to their own whims and fancies. They were intermingling with it Judaistic errors. It was just this false teaching, the outcome of private interpretation, that elicited the trumpet note of warning from the pen of the holy Martyr.

b) Submission to the Bishops.

Ignatius is vehement in his denunciation of heresy, but he is equally insistent on the authority of the bishops. Submission to the bishops and clergy is the condition, without which they can not know the truth and persevere in the true doctrine.

In the epistle to the Ephesians he writes: "It is, therefore, meet for you in every way to glorify Jesus Christ who glorified you; that being perfectly joined together in one submission, submitting yourselves to your bishop and presbytery, ye may be sanctified in all things" (ch. 2). By submission to the bishop and presbytery, Ignatius says, they will be sanctified in all things. Note that he requires nothing else but obedience to the bishop and clergy, knowing that thereby the means of their

sanctification will be secured. In chapter 3 he says: "But, since love doth not suffer me to be silent concerning you, therefore, was I forward to exhort you, that ye run in harmony with the mind of God: for Jesus Christ also, our inseparable life, is the mind of the Father, even as the bishops that are settled in the farthest parts of the earth are in the mind of Jesus Christ." Ignatius exhorts them to run in harmony with the mind of God. They will do this if they run in harmony with the mind of the bishops, that is, if they obey them, for the bishops are "in the mind of Jesus Christ."

In chapter 4 he continues: "So then it becometh you to run in harmony with the mind of the bishop; which thing also ye do. For your honorable presbytery, which is worthy of God, is attuned to the bishop, even as its strings to a lyre. Therefore, in your concord and harmonious love Jesus Christ is sung. And do ye, each and all, form yourselves into a chorus, that being harmonious in concord and taking the keynote of God, ye may in unison sing with one voice through Jesus Christ unto the Father, that He may both hear you and acknowledge you by your good deeds to be members of His Son. It is, therefore, profitable for you to be in blameless unity, that ye may also be partakers of God always." The obedience of the faithful to the bishop must be of the most perfect harmony. Ignatius shows this under the simile of a lyre. The bishop is the lyre, the presbyters the strings thereof, the faithful are the chorus. The strings must be attuned to the bishop, that is, the presbyters must be subject to him. The faithful must sing in harmony with the lyre through obedience to the bishop and presbyters. By this harmony with the episcopate we "sing with one voice through Jesus Christ unto the Father." "Let us, therefore," he exhorts them, "be careful not to resist the bishop, that by our submission we may give ourselves to God" (ch. 5).

Ignatius cannot impress too strongly the importance

of this obedience to the bishop and clergy. He refers to it again under the figure of a steward and his household. "For every one," he writes in chapter 6, "whom the Master of the household sendeth to be steward over His own house, we ought so to receive as Him that sent him. Plainly, therefore, we ought to regard the bishop as the Lord Himself. Now Onesimus of his own accord highly praiseth your orderly conduct in God, for that ye all live according to truth, and that no heresy hath a home among you" . . . A steward's office is to govern the affairs of his master. He enjoys authority over the servants and the household affairs. He makes known the master's orders. He acts in the name of the master. The bishops, according to Ignatius, are the stewards of God. They have charge of His household here on earth, namely, of the Church. They govern the faithful; they make known God's will to man. They act in God's name. They are His representatives. Hence, by our submission to the bishop, God's steward, we give ourselves to God.

In similar strains the saintly Bishop speaks to the Magnesians. After praising the deacon, Zotion, for his obedience to the bishop, he says: "Yea, and it becometh you also not to presume upon the youth of your bishop, but according to the power of God the Father to render unto him all reverence, even as I have learned that the holy presbyters also have not taken advantage of his outwardly youthful estate, but give place to him as to one prudent in God; yet not to him, but to the Father of Jesus Christ, even to the Bishop of all" (ch. 3). The faithful should see in their bishop, youthful though he be, the representative of God Himself. Obedience to the bishop is obedience to God Himself. Hence, he rebukes those who "have the bishop's name on their lips, but in everything act apart from him" (ch. 4). "Such men," he says, "appear to me not to keep a good conscience, forasmuch as they do not assemble themselves together lawfully according to commandment" (ch. 4).

In chapter 6 he continues: "Seeing then that in the aforementioned persons I beheld your whole people in faith and embraced them, I advise you, be ye zealous to do all things in godly concord, the bishop presiding after the likeness of God and the presbyters after the likeness of the council of the Apostles, with the deacons also who are most dear to me, having been entrusted with the diaconate of Jesus Christ, who was with the Father before the worlds and appeared at the end of time. Therefore, do ye all study conformity to God and pay reverence one to another; and let no man regard his neighbor after the flesh, but love ye one another in Jesus Christ always. Let there be nothing among you which shall have power to divide you, but be ye united with the bishop and with them that preside over you as an ensample and a lesson of incorruptibility." Here is another striking reference to the divine authority of the bishops and clergy. The bishops preside after the likeness of God, and the presbyters after the likeness of the Apostles. Hence, nothing should divide the people from the bishops. They should be united with the latter by the closest bonds of obedience. How great this dependence on the bishops must be, is indicated in the following passage: "Therefore, as the Lord did nothing without the Father, (being united with Him), either by Himself or by the Apostles, so neither do ye anything without the bishop and the presbyters" (ch. 7). A greater union than that of the Father and the Son cannot be imagined. Yet it is just such a union that Ignatius wishes to have between the bishops and the faithful.

The holy Martyr reveals the same sentiments in his epistle to the Trallians. He rejoices that the Trallians are imitators of God, and he says: "For when ye are obedient to the bishop as to Jesus Christ, it is evident to me that ye are living not after men, but after Jesus Christ, who died for us, that believing on His death ye might escape death. It is, therefore, necessary, even as

your wont is, that ye should do nothing without the bishop; but be ye obedient also to the presbytery, as to the Apostles of Jesus Christ our hope; for if we live in Him, we shall also be found in Him. And those likewise who are deacons of the mysteries of Jesus Christ must please all men in all ways. For they are not deacons of meats and drinks, but servants of the Church of God. It is right, therefore, that they should beware of blame as of fire" (ch. 2). Obedience to the bishops is living according to Jesus Christ,—again an indication of the divine authority of the bishops. Obedience to the presbyters is obedience to the Apostles. "In like manner," he continues, "let all men respect the deacons as Jesus Christ, even as they should respect the bishop as being a type of the Father and the presbyters as the council of God and as the college of Apostles. Apart from these there is not even the name of a church" (ch. 3). Surely Ignatius could not be more explicit or more insistent on the divine authority of the hierarchy. Without the bishops, presbyters and deacons there cannot even be the name of a church. They are the *conditio sine qua non*, the foundation, as it were, upon which the faithful are founded. It is from these men that the faithful must receive their doctrine. All other teachers they must avoid. Obedience to the bishops and clergy will preserve them from the poisonous fruit of heresy. More forcibly still does he insist on this obedience in chapter 7. After warning the Trallians to be on their guard against heretics, he writes: "And this will surely be, if ye be not puffed up and if ye be inseparable from (God) Jesus Christ and from the bishop and from the ordinances of the Apostles. He that is within the sanctuary is clean; but he that is without the sanctuary is not clean, that is, he that doeth aught without the bishop and presbytery and deacons, this man is not clean in his conscience." Here we have that same thought expressed so often by Ignatius, namely, union with the bishop is union with Christ

Himself; and at the same time we have the express statement that "he that doeth aught without the bishop and presbytery and deacons . . . is not clean in his conscience," in other words, is in sin. Thereby the Saint shows us that this submission to the hierarchy is an important obligation binding under penalty of sin.

The selfsame thoughts and often, too, the selfsame expressions are re-echoed in the letter to the Philadelphians. The bishop of the Philadelphians Ignatius praises, because he holds "the ministry which pertaineth to the common weal, not of himself or through men, nor yet for vain glory, but in the love of God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ . . . He is attuned in harmony with the commandments, as a lyre with its strings" (ch. 1). Therefore, the faithful as children of truth must obey him,—"Where the shepherd is, there follow ye as sheep," in order that "the specious wolves with baneful delights" may not "lead captive the runners in God's race" (ch. 2). Those that are "of God and of Jesus Christ," he tells them, are "with the bishop" (ch. 3). That they might not be seduced by the false teachers, he reminds them how he warned them when he was among them. "I cried out, when I was among you; I spake with a loud voice, with God's own voice, Give ye heed to the bishop and the presbytery and deacons . . . Do nothing without the bishop" (ch. 7). Yet those who have been disobedient should not lose courage. "The Lord forgiveth all men when they repent, if repenting they return to the unity of God and to the council of the bishop" (ch. 8).

In his letter to the Smyrnians Ignatius inculcates the same truths again. Submission to the bishop is the one and only means of protection against false doctrines. "Do ye all follow your bishop," he writes, "as Jesus Christ followed the Father, and the presbytery as the Apostles; and to the deacons pay respect, as to God's commandment. Let no man do aught of things pertaining

to the Church apart from the bishop. Let that be held a valid eucharist which is under the bishop or one to whom he shall have committed it. Wheresoever the bishop shall appear, there let the people be; even as where Jesus may be, there is the universal[21] Church. It is not lawful apart from the bishop either to baptize or hold a love-feast; but whatsoever he shall approve, this is well-pleasing also to God; that everything which ye do may be sure and valid" (ch. 8). "It is good to recognise God and the bishop. He that honoreth the bishop is honored of God; he that doeth aught without the knowledge of the bishop rendereth service to the devil" (ch. 9). In his epistle to Polycarp, he says: "Give ye heed to the bishop, that God also may give heed to you. I am devoted to those who are subject to the bishop, the presbyters, the deacons. May it be granted me to have my portion with them in the presence of God" (ch. 6).

Thus, according to the mind of Ignatius the bishops are the representatives of God, the ambassadors of Christ, the stewards of His household. They are the divinely authorized teachers of Christendom, they are the successors of the Apostles, the custodians of the apostolic doctrine, and the only true exponents of that doctrine. For that reason the faithful must obey them and respect them. They must be united with them, they must live in harmony with them, they must submit to them. And this union with the bishops, this obedience and submission to them, is the safeguard and protection against heresy.

The Ignatian Letters, therefore, afford a powerful argument in favor of the Catholic rule of faith. The bishops, as the divinely appointed teachers of the apostolic doctrine, are the teaching authority in the Church of God. The doctrine they propound is that received

[21] The ante-Nicene translation has "catholic." The Greek word is *καθολική*.

from the Apostles themselves, and preserved in the Church; hence the apostolic tradition.

The Letters of Ignatius are, moreover, a strong refutation of the Protestant rule of faith. For, in the first place, private interpretation is severely condemned. The teaching authority of the bishops is the only legitimate standard. Secondly, there is nothing said of the Bible. The Bible is not the sole rule of faith in the mind of Ignatius. Evidently he regards the written Word as part of the apostolic teaching, but it is the *apostolic tradition,* the doctrine that was deposited with the bishops, and of which they alone are the interpreters, that was uppermost in the mind of the Martyr. And this apostolic tradition together with the written word of the New Testament, taught and interpreted by the bishops, is according to him the only true rule of faith.

CHAPTER IV.

St. Polycarp, Bishop of Smyrna.

1. *As a witness for the Rule of Faith.*

Closely associated with Ignatius is Polycarp, Bishop of Smyrna. Polycarp was born probably about the year 69 or 70 A. D.[1] Of his early history nothing is known with certainty. Irenaeus states that he was a disciple of the Apostles and was appointed to a bishopric in Asia by the Apostles themselves. "And (so it was with) Polycarp also, who was not only taught by Apostles and lived in familiar intercourse with many that had seen Christ, but also received his appointment in Asia from Apostles, as bishop in the Church of Smyrna."[2] Tertullian says he was named bishop of Smyrna by St. John.[3]

Intimately associated with Polycarp was his friend and disciple Irenaeus. It was from the devoted Bishop of Smyrna that Irenaeus learned to know and to love the Catholic faith, as he himself tells us in his letter to Florinus. Writing to his former friend and companion, he recalls the happy days, when together Florinus and he sat at the feet of the venerable Bishop and listened to the words of faith and fervor that fell from his lips. "For I saw thee," he writes, "when I was still a boy in Lower Asia in company with Polycarp, while thou wast faring prosperously in the royal court and endeavoring to stand well with him. For I distinctly remember the incidents of that time better than the events of recent occurrence; for the lessons received from childhood growing with the growth of the soul, become identified with it; so that

[1] Lightfoot, *op. cit.*, Part II, Vol. I, p. 422.
[2] *Adv. Haer.*, III, 3, 4.
[3] *De Praescriptionibus*, ch. 32.

I can tell the very place in which the blessed Polycarp used to sit when he discoursed, and his goings out and his comings in, and his manner of life, and his personal appearance, and the discourses which he held before the people, and how he would describe his intercourse with John and with the rest of those who had seen the Lord, and how he would relate their words. And whatsoever things he had heard from them about the Lord and about his miracles and about his teaching, Polycarp, as having received them from eye-witnesses of the life of the Word, would relate altogether in accordance with the Scriptures. To these things I used to listen at the time with attention by God's mercy which was bestowed upon me, noting them down not on paper, but in my heart; and constantly, by the grace of God, I ruminate upon them faithfully.''[4]

In this touching description of his venerable master, Irenaeus shows that it was the things that he had heard from the Apostles, their discourses and their teaching on the Lord and His works that Polycarp taught. Unflinching fidelity to the apostolic teaching and tradition was the strong characteristic of the Saint. This fidelity shone forth in all his actions. He ''ever taught these very things which he had learnt from the Apostles, which the Church hands down and which alone are true.''[5] He also, when on a visit to Rome in the days of Anicetus,'' Irenaeus says, ''converted many to the Church of God from following the aforenamed heretics by preaching that he had received from the Apostles this doctrine, and this only which was handed down by the Church as the truth.''[6] When Pope Anicetus desired that he conform to the Western Church regarding the Easter celebration, Polycarp refused on the ground that he could not give up a custom, which he had learned from St. John and the

[4] Eusebius, *Hist. Eccles.*, V, 20. Cfr. Lightfoot, *op. cit.*, p. 429.
[5] *Adv. Haer.*, III, 3, 4.
[6] *Op. cit.*, III, 3, 4.

Apostles.[7] Anicetus must have admired the faithfulness of the venerable Bishop, for we are told, he did not insist on the change, and both parted in peace. Polycarp is thus a powerful witness for the apostolic tradition. Of private interpretation of the Scriptures he has nothing favorable to say.

His loyalty to the apostolic doctrine made him the avowed enemy of heretics and filled him with an abhorrence for heresy. Like Ignatius he shunned false teachers as one would a wild beast. When Marcion confronted him one day and asked if he recognized him, Polycarp's simple reply was: "Ay, ay, I recognize the first-born of Satan."[8] He had such horror for any doctrine contrary to that of the Apostles, that, as Irenaeus remarks, if he heard any false teaching, "he would have cried out and stopped his ears, and would have said after his wont, 'O good God, for what times hast thou kept me, that I should endure such things,' and would have fled from the very place where he was sitting or standing."[9]

It was this apostolic spirit that endeared the holy Bishop to Ignatius, the Martyr. To Ignatius Polycarp is an 'immovable rock,' an 'anvil,' firm 'under the hammer's strokes,'[10] a most faithful copy of the Apostles and a firm adherent of their doctrines. False teaching can not swerve him from the truth. This loyalty to Apostolic teaching was the bond that drew Ignatius to him. Ignatius with his horror of heresy and hatred of heretics would never have been intimate with any one but a lover of the apostolic tradition.

Like Ignatius, too, he would die rather than deny his faith. When a persecution broke out in Smyrna, Polycarp was apprehended. He could have escaped, had he chosen to do so, but he preferred death to life. When

[7] Eusebius, *Hist. Eccles.*, V, 24.
[8] *Adv. Haer.*, III, 3, 4.
[9] Eusebius, *Hist. Eccles.*, V, 20.
[10] *Ep. to Polyc.*, 1 and 3.

urged by the proconsul to swear by the genius of Caesar and to revile Christ his God, the aged Bishop gave this memorable answer, so characteristic of his unswerving fidelity: "Four score and six years have I served Him, and He hath done me no wrong. How then can I speak evil of my King, who saved me?"[11]

The testimony of this saintly Bishop, the disciple of St. John, the master of Irenaeus, the friend of Ignatius and a martyr for the faith, is of the greatest value.

2. *Letter to the Philippians.*

According to Irenaeus, Polycarp wrote several epistles "to neighboring communities to strenghten them in their faith and also to individual brethren to teach and admonish them."[12] "There is also," he says, "a very excellent letter of Polycarp to the Philippians from which those who are of good will and are intent upon their salvation can see the form of his faith and the preaching of truth."[13] Eusebius[14] and Jerome[15] speak only of this one epistle. It is the only work of Polycarp that has come down to us. Merely fragments of the Greek original are extant, but the entire work is to be found in an old Latin translation.

The letter was written shortly after Ignatius' martyrdom (ca. 117 A.D.) at the request of the Philippians. The work was highly prized by the early Christians and as late as the fourth century some communities were wont to read it at divine service.[16]

A few critics have denied the authenticity and integrity of the epistle, because it refers to the Ignatian Letters. But this view is discredited by the great run of modern

[11] *Mart. S. Polyc.*, 9, 3.
[12] *Ep. ad Flor.*, in Eus., *Hist. Eccles.*, V, 20, 6.
[13] Iren., *Adv. Haer.*, III, 3, 4.
[14] *Hist. Eccles.*, III, 36.
[15] *De Viris Illustribus*, III, 17.
[16] St. Jerome, *op. cit.*, III, 17: "Scripsit ad Philippenses valde utilem epistolam, quae usque hodie in Asiae conventu legitur."

scholars. Its authenticity is guaranteed by Irenaeus, and the unity of the work is proof for its integrity.

3. *The Rule of Faith in Polycarp's Letter.*

The Letter to the Philippians amply bears out the statement of Irenaeus that Polycarp preached the things which he had heard from eye-witnesses of the Lord and which the Church hands down and which alone are true. In no uncertain terms the holy Bishop of Smyrna exhorts the Christians to be faithful to Christ's teaching, which they have received through the Apostles, and he also warns them against heresy and insists on obedience to the presbyters and deacons.

Thus in chapter 1 we read: "I rejoiced with you greatly in our Lord Jesus Christ . . . that the stedfast root of your faith which was famed from primitive times abideth until now and beareth fruit unto our Lord Jesus Christ." Polycarp praises the Philippians because they have kept the faith received from the Apostle St. Paul. In chapter 3 he says: "For neither am I, nor is any other like unto me, able to follow the wisdom of the blessed and glorious Paul, who when he came among you taught face to face with the men of that day the word which concerneth truth carefully and surely; who also, when he was absent, wrote a letter unto you, into the which if ye look diligently, ye shall be able to be builded up unto the faith given to you, *which is the mother of us all.*" . . . Notice that it is the apostolic faith that the Philippians have preserved; and that it is for this fidelity to apostolic teaching that Polycarp commends them.

In chapter 6 he urges them to continue faithfully in this apostolic doctrine. "Let us therefore so serve Him (God) with fear and all reverence, as He Himself gave commandment and the Apostles who preached the Gospel to us and the prophets who proclaimed beforehand the coming of our Lord; being zealous as touching that which is good, abstaining from offences and from the false

brethren and from them that bear the name of the Lord in hypocrisy, who lead foolish men astray." In this exhortation to serve God with fear and reverence as Christ Himself commanded and the Apostles preached, Polycarp condemns private interpretation and bears witness to the authoritative teaching power of the Church. The faithful must be on their guard against those, who deviating from the apostolic doctrine, teach false things in the name of the Lord and lead the foolish astray.

Those who disregard this teaching authority and allow themselves to be influenced by false teachers, the advocates of private judgment in religious affairs, are severely condemned in chapter 7. "For every one," we read, "*who shall not confess that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh, is antichrist;* and whosoever shall not confess the testimony of the Cross is of *the devil;* and whosoever shall pervert the oracles of the Lord to his own lusts and say that there is neither resurrection nor judgment, that man is the first-born of Satan." These are strong terms; Polycarp could hardly say anything worse. Any one who teaches a doctrine different from that received from the Apostles is antichrist, of the devil and the first-born of Satan. So odious is heresy to him, so contrary to the teaching of Christ and the Apostles is private interpretation in his mind, that he sees in false teachers and advocates of private opinions the very minions of Satan.

Like Ignatius, Polycarp regards obedience to the bishops and deacons as the only safeguard against these false teachers. "Wherefore," he says in chapter 5, "it is right to abstain from all these things (namely, sinful actions), submitting yourselves to the presbyters and deacons as to God and Christ." And in chapter 7 he writes: "Wherefore let us forsake the vain doing of the many and their false teachings, and turn unto the word which was delivered unto us from the beginning." It is plain that he looks upon the presbyters and deacons as the representatives of God, as the stewards of Christ's

household, the Church. As such they are to be obeyed. As the representatives of God they have divine authority, they are the custodians of the apostolic doctrine and they are the divinely appointed interpreters of this doctrine. Therefore, they, and they alone, have the one true doctrine which leads to life eternal, the one true rule of faith.

Polycarp's letter is thus an excellent testimony to the Catholic rule of faith. It condemns private interpretation and insists on the authorative teaching power of the Church. Polycarp lays stress on the teaching handed down in the Church, the teaching preached by the Apostles, that is, the apostolic tradition. He does not disregard, however, the written Word. It also contains apostolic truth. Polycarp's rule of faith, therefore, is the apostolic tradition, handed down by word of mouth and by the Scriptures, and interpreted by the authoritative teaching voice of the Church.

CHAPTER V.

St. Irenaeus, Bishop of Lyons.

1. *As a Witness to the Rule of Faith.*

St. Clement, St. Ignatius and St. Polycarp furnish valuable evidence for the rule of faith, but it remains for St. Irenaeus to give us invaluable testimony and irrefutable arguments in favor of the Catholic viewpoint. He is in all truth the outstanding authority of the period.

Irenaeus was born in Asia Minor, possibly in or near Smyrna, where he seems to have spent his early years. The date of his birth is quite uncertain. Some scholars put it as early as 97 A. D.; others as late as 147 A. D. Thus Dodwell favors the year 97;[1] Grabe assigns the year 108;[2] Zahn prefers the year 115;[3] Tillemont[4] and Lightfoot[5] favor the year 120; Swete also gives this date; Gebhart prefers 126-130;[7] Harvey puts it in the year 130;[8] Massuet,[9] Harnack,[10] Bardenhewer[11] argue in favor of the year 140, and Ziegler would have it in the year 147. Though there is the authority of Massuet, Harnack and Bardenhewer for the year 140, still a date as late as this

[1] *Dissert. iii. in Iren.* 6 sqq.
[2] *Prolegomena,* sect. i., 1.
[3] *Realencykl. f. prot. Theol. u. Kir.,* 9. Bd., p. 409.
[4] *Memoires,* III, p. 79.
[5] *The Churches of Gaul, in Cont. Rev.,* August, 1876, p. 415.
[6] *Patristic Study* (1902), p. 35.
[7] *Die Zeitschrift für die Historische Theologie,* 1875, p. 369.
[8] *Proleg.,* Vol. I, p. clv.
[9] *Dissert. ii. in Iren.,* p. 1.
[10] *Gesch. der Altchr. Liter.,* 2, 1, 333.
[11] *Op. cit.,* 1. Bd., p. 400.
[12] *Irenaeus der Bischof von Lyon,* p. 15.

Note: The citations of Irenaeus in this chapter are taken from the English edition of the Ante-Nicene Fathers (1903), Vol. I.

hardly fits in with St. Polycarp's lifespan. It makes Irenaeus fifteen years old at the time of Polycarp's death. The letter to Florinus seems to indicate that it was a long time since Irenaeus and Florinus sat at the feet of the saintly Bishop—possibly more than 30 or 40 years. Hence the year 130 seems to conform better with the evidence at hand.

In order to appreciate better the testimony of this great champion of the Church, it is necessary to know the position he held in the Church. Irenaeus was, in the first place, a disciple of the saintly Polycarp. It was from this holy Bishop that he learned the apostolic doctrine. It was from him, too, that he learned to love and cherish this teaching. Early intimacy had cemented the two together. Pupil and master had become in a manner one. So great was the esteem of Irenaeus for his old teacher that years afterward we find him manifesting his affection for Polycarp in his letter to his former friend and companion Florinus. The latter had imbibed some of the heretic doctrines of the time to the great grief of Irenaeus. Irenaeus remonstrates with his friend and tries to lead him back from the darkness of error. He recalls the happy memories of the past when together they sat at the feet of Polycarp.

"These opinions, Florinus," he writes, "that I speak without harshness, are not of sound judgment; these opinions are not in harmony with the Church, but involve those who adopt them in the greatest impiety; these opinions even the heretics outside the pale of the Church have never ventured to broach; these opinions the elders before us, who also were disciples of the Apostles, did not hand down to thee. For I saw thee, when I was still a boy (*παῖς ἔτι ὢν*), in Lower Asia in company with Polycarp, while thou wast faring prosperously in the royal court and endeavoring to stand well with him. For I distinctly remember (*διαμνημονεύω*) the incidents of that time better than the events of recent occurrence;

for the lessons received from childhood (ἐκ παίδων) growing with the growth of the soul, become identified with it; so that I can tell the very place in which the blessed Polycarp used to sit when he discoursed, and his goings out and his comings in, and his manner of life, and his personal appearance, and the discourses which he held before the people (πρὸς τὸ πλήθος), and how he would describe his intercourse with John and with the rest of those who had seen the Lord, and how he would relate their words. And whatsoever things he had heard from them about the Lord and about His miracles and about His teaching, Polycarp, as having received them from eye-witnesses of the life of the Word, would relate altogether in accordance with the Scriptures. To these things I used to listen at the time with attention by God's mercy which was bestowed upon me, noting them down not on paper but in my heart; and constantly, by the grace of God, I ruminate upon them faithfully (γνησίως). And I can testify in the sight of God, that if that blessed and apostolic elder had heard anything of this kind, he would have cried out, and stopped his ears, and would have said after his wont, 'O good God, for what times hast thou kept me, that I should endure these things,' and would have fled from the very place where he was sitting or standing when he heard such words. And indeed this can be shown from his letters, which he wrote either to the neighbouring churches for their confirmation or to certain of the brethren for their warning and exhortation.''[13]

In such strong and fervent language did Irenaeus plead with Florinus to abandon the error of his way. One can not fail to note the zeal and apostolic spirit of the writer. The beautiful and touching description of the venerable instructor, closing his ears to error and running away at the very sound of it, as if it were a deadly pestilence, while showing Polycarp's abhorrence for heresy, reveals

[13] The translation is taken from Lightfoot, *op. cit.*, Part II, Vol. I, p. 429.

at the same time a like trait in his pupil. Irenaeus, too, had the greatest hatred of heresy, yet how vastly different was his conduct toward it! Polycarp fled from heresy, Irenaeus pursued it. Polycarp would flee from Florinus. Irenaeus would go after him, and call him back from the error of his ways. Polycarp would stop his ears at the very sound of false doctrines, Irenaeus preferred to study it, that he might refute it. Polycarp fled from false teachers, Irenaeus would rather confront them and combat them, and prove to them that they were wrong.

Having been schooled in the apostolic doctrine and customs by Polycarp, Irenaeus was sent as a presbyter to Gaul. With the bold and fearless spirit of another Paul he gave up fortune, fame and friends, and settled amidst a rude and barbarous people, in order to spread the glad tidings of the Gospel. With true apostolic zeal he went about like his Master, not only preaching in season and out of season, but also contending and writing against the many popular heresies of the time.

An excellent tribute to his zeal is accorded him by the suffering clergy of Lyons and Vienne. While languishing in prison and awaiting for their end, these holy martyrs commissioned Irenaeus to represent them before Pope Eleutherus concerning Montanist troubles that had arisen. In a letter which they addressed to the Bishop of Rome they speak of Irenaeus as 'one zealous for the Testament of Christ.' "We have requested our brother and comrade, Irenaeus," the letter reads, "to carry this letter to you, and we ask you to hold him in esteem as zealous for the covenant of Christ."[14]

On his return to Gaul Irenaeus was appointed bishop of Lyons to succeed St. Pothinus, who had just been martyred in the persecution under Marcus Aurelius. It was in the midst of troublous times that he assumed the oversight of this portion of the Lord's vineyard. A terrible

[14] Eus., *Hist. eccles.*, V, 4, 2. The translation is from the *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*, Second Series, Vol. I, New York, 1904.

persecution was just drawing to a close, and the heresies of Valentinus, Marcion and Basilides were making violent inroads on the young Christian communities, threatening their very destruction. Irenaeus, however, was equal to the position. He proved himself a true shepherd to his afflicted flock. Unremitting in his quest for souls and fearless in his encounters with the subverters of the faith, he spared no labor and shrank from no danger where there was question of the glory of God and the Church. Zealous, active, faithful, persevering, bold, intrepid and learned, he was especially gifted to ferret out and expose the many heresies that were then uniting their forces against the Church. Even Tertullian recognizes his talent in this regard and calls him, "*Omnium doctrinarum curiosissimus explorator,*" the most curious searcher into all kinds of doctrines.[15]

He carried on his warfare against the false Gnosis chiefly by writing. At the request of a friend, who wished to know more about the Valentinian heresy, he wrote his monumental work, "The Detection and Overthrow of the Pretended but False Gnosis," commonly known as *Adversus Haereses.* It is an excellent exposition of Gnosticism under its various forms together with an exposition and refutation of the principal heresies that were gaining foothold in the Christian communities. In refuting the different errors Irenaeus laws down the true doctrine of the Church, and thus furnishes invaluable information on the early Church.

The work is of the highest importance because it gives us the testimony of a contemporary of the heroic age of the Church, and of one whose testimony, as Lightfoot remarks, "must be regarded as directly representing three Churches at least,"[16]—the Church of Asia Minor, where he received his early education, the Church of South Gaul,

[15] *Adv. Valent.*

[16] *Essays on Supernatural Religion,* p. 267.

in which he labored for years, and the Church of Rome, which he visited. Mosheim calls it, "one of the most precious monuments of ancient erudition."[17] And Swete does not hesitate to style Irenaeus himself "the first constructive theologian on the Catholic side."[18]

The date of composition must be determined by the passage III, 3, 3 in which Irenaeus speaks of Eleutherus as being at that time the twelfth in succession on the See of St. Peter. According to this statement the third book must have been written at the earliest 174 or 175 A. D. or at the latest 189 A. D., for Eleutherus' pontificate is reckoned from 174-189. The commencement and completion of the work were probably some years apart. The first three books may have been written between the years 180-189 A. D. and the last two books during the period from 189 to 199 A. D.

Although originally composed in Greek, the work has come down to us only in a Latin version, a very slavish translation of the original, made very soon after the original was written.

During the reign of Pope Victor I (189-199) Irenaeus took an active part in the controversy that arose concerning the Easter celebration. According to Eusebius he succeeded in effecting a happy compromise between the East and the West, 'doing honor to his name (Εἰρηναῖος) and bearing himself as a peacemaker (εἰρηνοποιός)."[19]

The date of his death is unknown, though critics usually assign it to the last part of the second century or the beginning of the third. If St. Jerome's testimony can be trusted, he suffered martyrdom under Septimus Severus (193-211 A. D.).[20]

[17] *Eccles. Hist.*, Vol. I, p. 146.
[18] *Op. cit.*, p. 36.
[19] *Hist. Eccles.*, V, 24, 18.
[20] *Comm. in Is.* ad 64, 4 ff.

2. *Rule of Faith in the Work "Adversus Haereses."*

In this 'most precious monument of ancient erudition' there is abundant evidence in favor of the Catholic rule of faith. In book III (preface) Irenaeus says that the only true and vivifying faith is that "which the Church has received from the apostles and imparted to her sons. For the Lord of all gave to his apostles the power of the Gospel; through whom also we have known the truth, that is, the doctrine of the Son of God; to whom also did the Lord declare: 'He that heareth you, heareth Me; and he that despiseth you, despiseth Me and Him that sent Me.'" And in chapter 1 of the same book he continues: "We have learned from none others the plan of our salvation than from those through whom the Gospel has come down to us, which they did at one time proclaim in public, and, at a later period, by the will of God, handed down to us in the Scriptures, to be the ground and pillar of our faith. For it is unlawful to assert that they preached before they possessed 'perfect knowledge' as some do even venture to say, boasting themselves as improvers of the apostles. For after our Lord rose from the dead, (the apostles) were invested with power from on high when the Holy Spirit came down (upon them), were filled from all (His gifts), and had perfect knowledge; they departed to the ends of the earth, preaching the glad tidings of the good things (sent) from God to us, and proclaiming the peace of heaven to men, who indeed do all equally and individually possess the Gospel of God."

Irenaeus brings out several important facts in these passages. First, he declares that the teaching of the Church is apostolic. "The only true and life-giving faith is that which the Church has received from the apostles." "We have learned from none others the plan of our salvation than from those through whom the Gospel has come down to us." Secondly, he says, that this

apostolic teaching is the one true teaching of Christ. "For the Lord of all has given to his apostles the power of the gospel," and "the apostles were invested with power from on high, when the Holy Spirit came down upon them." Thirdly, he tells us that the apostles imparted this doctrine to the Church in a two-fold way, namely, by preaching and by writing—"which they did at one time proclaim in public, and, at a later period, by the will of God, handed down to us in the Scriptures, to be the ground and pillar of our faith;" and "they departed to the ends of the earth preaching the glad tidings sent from God to us." Finally, he writes, all those who hold a doctrine different from that of the Church, a doctrine different from that which the Church has received from the apostles through tradition and Scripture, have not the truth. "For it is unlawful to assert that they (namely, the apostles) preached before they possessed 'perfect knowledge' as some do even venture to say, boasting themselves as improvers of the apostles." Irenaeus thus bears witness to the Catholic rule of faith, namely, the apostolic doctrine contained in Scripture and tradition and deposited with the Church, and likewise taught and interpreted by that same Church.

In the same chapter he continues: "Matthew also issued a written Gospel among the Hebrews in their own dialect, while Peter and Paul were preaching at Rome, and laying the foundations of the Church. After their departure, Mark, the disciple and interpreter of Peter, did also hand down to us in writing what had been preached by Peter. Luke also, the companion of Paul, recorded in a book the Gospel preached by him. Afterwards, John, the disciple of the Lord, who also had leaned upon His breast, did himself publish a Gospel during his residence at Ephesus in Asia."

Irenaeus thus vouches for the apostolic origin of the four gospels. He is especially insistent on the apostolic tradition, but at the same time he stresses the importance

of the written word. "These have all declared to us," he writes, "that there is one God, Creator of heaven and earth, announced by the law and the prophets; and one Christ, the Son of God. If anyone do not agree to these truths, he despises the companions of the Lord; nay more, he despises Christ Himself the Lord; yea, he despises the Father also, and stands self-condemned, resisting and opposing his own salvation, as is the case with all heretics." Remember Irenaeus is writing against the Gnostics, and hence is defending the oneness of God and the divinity of Christ. The heretics by denying these truths, Irenaeus says, go against the written word of the Apostles, and thereby resist their eternal salvation. And he adds, not only those who deny these doctrines, but all heretics, whatsoever their doctrine, by opposing the apostolic teaching imperil their eternal salvation. This is an explicit condemnation of private interpretation.

In chapter 2, 1 he shows the insincerity of the false teachers. "When, however," he writes, "they are confuted from the Scriptures, they turn round and accuse these same Scriptures, as if they were not correct, nor of authority, and (assert) that they are ambiguous, and that the truth can not be extracted from them by those who are ignorant of tradition. For (they allege) that the truth was not delivered by means of written documents, but *viva voce;* wherefore also Paul declared, 'But we speak wisdom among those that are perfect, but not the wisdom of this world.'[21] And this wisdom each one of them alleges to be the fiction of his own inventing, forsooth; so that, according to their idea, the truth properly resides at one time in Valentinus, at another in Marcion, at another in Cerinthus, then afterwards in Basilides, or has even been indifferently in any other opponent, who could speak nothing pertaining to salvation. For every one of these men, being altogether of a perverse disposi-

[21] I Cor. ii, 16.

tion, depraving the system of truth, is not ashamed to preach himself."

Refuted from the Scriptures the heretics appeal to tradition, but thereby they show themselves very inconsistent. For how can they appeal to tradition, when they themselves confess that their doctrine is of their own invention? If they had the true tradition, they would necessarily teach one and the same doctrine. On the contrary, however, they have their own pet theories, no two of which are alike. This diversity of teaching is proof of its falsehood. The inconsistency, the hypocrisy and arrogance of these men is sufficient to condemn them.

In the following paragraph (III, 2, 2) Irenaeus refers to the insincerity and arrogance of the heretics again. "But again," he writes, "when we refer them to that tradition, which originates from the apostles (and) which is preserved by means of the successions of the presbyters in the Churches, they object to tradition, saying that they themselves are wiser not merely than the presbyters, but even than the apostles, because they have discovered the unadulterated truth. For (they maintain) that the apostles intermingled the things of the law with the words of the Saviour; and that not the apostles alone, but even the Lord Himself, spoke as at one time from the Demiurge, at another from the intermediate place, and yet again from the Pleroma, but that they themselves indubitably, unsulliedly, and purely, have knowledge of the hidden mystery; this is indeed, to blaspheme their Creator after the most impudent manner! It comes to this, therefore, that these men do now consent neither to Scripture nor to tradition." The Gnostics in their boldness set their doctrine above the Scripture and tradition, believing themselves wiser than Christ and the Apostles, and even maintaining, that they alone had the true teaching. This conduct, according to Irenaeus, is blasphemy of the most impious kind. It is, "the tradition which originates from the Apostles and which is preserved by means of the suc-

cessions of the presbyters in the Churches," which one must believe and hold. This apostolic tradition found in the Churches is the one true rule of faith. It is from the bishops of these apostolic Churches, therefore, that one must get this doctrine and not from Valentinus, or Marcion, or Cerinthus, or Basilides or any one else.

Nor is there any excuse, according to Irenaeus, for going to the heretics, for he says: "It is within the power of all, therefore, in every Church, who may wish to see the truth, to contemplate clearly the tradition of the Apostles manifested throughout the whole world; and we are in a position to reckon up those who were by the apostles instituted bishops in the Churches, and (to demonstrate) the succession of these men to our own times; those who neither taught nor knew of anything like what these (heretics) rave about. For if the apostles had known hidden mysteries, which they were in the habit of imparting to 'the perfect' apart and privily from the rest, they would have delivered them especially to those to whom they were also committing the Churches themselves. For they were desirous that these men should be very perfect and blameless in all things, whom also they were leaving behind as their successors, delivering up their own place of government to these men; which men, if they discharged their functions honestly, would be a great boon (to the Church), but if they should fall away, the direst calamity." (III, 3, 1). The great test of doctrine according to Irenaeus is the apostolic succession. The apostles gave their teaching to their disciples, these in turn entrusted it to their successors, and so on. The ultimate successors of the apostles are the bishops of the apostolic Churches. To these, then, one must go for the pure, unalloyed doctrine of Christ.

That there be not the slightest misgiving about the apostolic succession, Irenaeus shows the order of succession in the Church of Rome, the most prominent of the apostolic Churches. "Since, however, it would be

very tedious in such a volume as this, to reckon up the successions of all the Churches, we do put to confusion all those who, in whatever manner, whether by an evil self-pleasing, by vainglory, or by blindness and perverse opinion, assemble in unauthorized meetings; (we do this, I say,) by indicating that tradition derived from the apostles, of the very great, the very ancient and universally known Church founded and organized at Rome by the two most glorious apostles, Peter and Paul; as also (by pointing out) the faith preached to men, which comes down to our time by means of the successions of the bishops. For it is a matter of necessity that every Church should agree with this Church on account of its preeminent authority, that is, the faithful everywhere, in as much as the apostolical tradition has been preserved continuously by those (faithful men) who exist everywhere."[22]

"The blessed apostles, then, having founded and built up the Church, committed into the hands of Linus the office of episcopate. Of this Linus, Paul makes mention in the Epistles to Timothy" (III, 3, 3). After enumerating all the bishops of Rome from St. Peter on down to Eleutherus, he concludes with this striking passage: "In

[22] Ch. III, 3, 2. "'Ad hanc enim Ecclesiam propter potentiorem principalitatem necesse est omnem convenire Ecclesiam, hoc est, eos qui sunt undique fideles, in qua semper ab his, qui sunt undique, conservata est ea quae est ab apostolis traditio." There are various interpretations of this passage. The above translation from the English edition of the Ante-Nicene Fathers is not so good. The editor in a footnote remarks: "We are far from sure that the rendering given above is correct, but we have been unable to think of anything better." He cites the following translation from Berington and Kirk, Vol. I, p. 252: "For to this Church, on account of more potent principality, it is necessary that every Church (that is, those who are on every side faithful) *resort;* in which Church ever, *by those who are on every side,* has been preserved that tradition which is from the apostles." Bardenhewer-Shahan gives the following translation: "With this Church, because of its higher rank, every church must agree, i. e., the faithful of all places, in which (in communion with which) the apostolic tradition has been always preserved by the (faithful) of all places." P. 121. Cfr. Batiffol, *Primitive Catholicism,* p. 207 sq.; also Funk, *Kirchengeschichtliche Abhandlungen,* Vol. I, p. 18 sq.

this order, and by this succession, the ecclesiastical tradition from the apostles, and the preaching of the truth have come down to us. And this is most abundant proof that there is one and the same vivifying faith, which has been preserved in the Church from the Apostles until now, and handed down in truth." (III, 3, 3).

The apostolic succession is the crushing argument aganst all heretics. Lest, however, they dispute this point too, Irenaeus very wisely enumerates the bishops of the Roman Church, thus removing every doubt concerning their claim to the true doctrine. The bishops, as the legitimate successors of the Apostles, are the divinely appointed custodians of this doctrine, the vehicle of its transmission, and consequently also, the authorized teachers and interpreters of it. Moreover, he says, that the teaching of the other apostolic Churches is in perfect agreement with that of the Church of Rome, so that the faithful, scattered, as they are, all over the world, have one and the same rule of faith. This doctrine one, universal, apostolic, is alone true. The apostolic succession thus puts to shame and confounds "all those who, in whatever manner, whether by an evil self-pleasing, by vainglory, or by blindness and perverse opinion, assemble in unauthorized meeting." In the light of this evidence all exponents of private interpretation stand condemned.

To weaken the force of this testimony the assertion has been made that Irenaeus is inventing something new, that he is introducing the apostolic succession as a deceptive means and as a last resort to save the bishops in their struggle with heresy. Such an invention, however, would be impossible. Irenaeus cites the names of the bishops of Rome. These names were certainly not unknown to the heretics, and if he were making false statements, they would have quickly brought him to task for it. Instead of that they try to claim the apostolic succession for themselves. Furthermore, the faithful themselves would have resented a misrepresentation of facts,

especially in so important a matter. Yet history knows of no protest or resentment.

Besides Irenaeus is writing against novel doctrines and defending the old-time honored traditions of the Apostles. Would he not defeat his own purpose if he himself sought to introduce new doctrines? The heretics could object that he was teaching a doctrine different from that of the Apostles. Irenaeus, however, is far from introducing any thing new. He is only repeating what St. Clement and St. Ignatius and St. Polycarp had taught before him.

The testimony of Irenaeus is confirmed by that of Hegesippus. This learned Church antiquarian undertook long journeys (ca. 179 A. D.), in order to assure himself of the general agreement of the Christian communities in their doctrinal traditions. He visited each apostolic Church and inquired for the unbroken succession of its bishops and their teaching. The result of his investigation he sums up in the following noteworthy testimony: "When I went to Rome, I drew up a list of succession[23] as far as Anicetus, whose deacon Eleutherus (then) was. In every succession and in every city, that is held, which is preached by the law and the prophets and the Lord."[24] Thus Hegesippus, likewise, regards the apostolic succession as incontestable evidence for the purity and genuineness of the apostolic teaching.

[23] Διαδοχὴν ἐποιησάμην, "I made for myself a succession." The best scholars prefer this reading, thus Lipsius, Lightfoot, Renan, Duchesne, Weizsäcker, Salmon, Caspari, Funk, Turner, Bardenhewer, Chapman. Saville, Harnack, McGiffert and Zahn think the text should read: διατριβὴν ἐποιησάμην, "And being in Rome I made a stay there till Anicetus." Lightfoot, however, has shown that this reading is untenable. Cfr. *Apostolic Fathers*, Pt. 1, Vol. I, p. 154. See also Chapman, art. *Hegesippus*, Cath. Encycl., Vol. VII, p. 194.

[24] Eusebius, *Hist. Eccles.*, IV, 22. *The Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*, Second Series, Vol. I, *Church History of Eusebius*, contains this translation: "And when I had come to Rome I remained there until Anicetus, whose deacon was Eleutherus. And Anicetus was succeeded by Soter, and he by Eleutherus. In every succession, and in every city that is held which is preached by the law and the prophets and the Lord."

It was the heretics, who corrupted this doctrine by introducing their own private opinions. "Each," he writes, "introduced privately and separately his own peculiar opinion."[25] And again in another place he says: "The Church up to that time,[26] had remained a pure and uncorrupted virgin, since, if there were any that attempted to corrupt the sound norm of the preaching of salvation, they lay until then concealed in obscure darkness. But when the sacred college of apostles had suffered death in various forms, and the generation of those that had been deemed worthy to hear the inspired wisdom with their own ears had passed away, then the league of godless error took its rise as a result of the folly of heretical teachers, who, because none of the apostles was still living, attempted henceforth, with bold face, to proclaim, in opposition to the preaching of truth, the 'knowledge which is falsely so-called.'"[27] Thus, both Irenaeus and Hegesippus hold that episcopal office rests on the apostolic succession, and on the historical connection of the bishops with the Apostles, depends the certainty of their doctrine.

"Since therefore we have such proofs," writes Irenaeus in chapter 4, book III, "it is not necessary to seek the truth among others which it is easy to obtain from the Church; since the apostles, like a rich man (depositing his money) in a bank, lodged in her hands most copiously all things pertaining to the truth; so that every man, whosoever will, can draw from her the water of life. For she is the entrance to life; all others are thieves and robbers. On this account are we bound to avoid *them,* but to make choice of the things pertaining to the Church with the utmost diligence, and to lay hold of the tradition of the truth." These words are clear. The Church alone has received the sacred teaching of Christ.

[25] Eusebius, *Hist. Eccles.*, IV, 22.
[26] Namely, of Trajan.
[27] Eusebius, *Hist. Eccles.*, III, 32.

She alone is the entrance to life. All others professing to teach the truth are thieves and robbers.

The importance of tradition, and at the same time the insufficiency of Scripture, as a rule of faith, is pointed out in the same chapter. "Suppose there arise a dispute relative to some important question among us, should we not have recourse to the most ancient Churches with which the apostles held constant intercourse, and learn from them what is certain and clear in regard to the present question? For how should it be if the apostles themselves had not left us writings? Would it not be necessary, (in that case) to follow the course of the tradition which they handed down to those to whom they did commit the Churches?" (III, 4, 1).

"To which course many nations of those barbarians who believe in Christ do assent, having salvation written in their hearts by the Spirit, without paper or ink, and carefully preserving the ancient tradition, believing in one God, the Creator of heaven and earth, and all things therein, by means of Christ Jesus, the Son of God; who, because of His surpassing love toward His creation, condescended to be born of the virgin, He Himself uniting man through Himself to God, and having suffered under Pontius Pilate, and rising again, and having been received up in splendor, shall come in glory, the Saviour of those who are saved, and the Judge of those who are judged, and sending into eternal fire those who transform the truth, and despise His Father and His advent. Those, who in the absence of written documents, have believed this faith, are barbarians, so far as regards our language; but as regards doctrine, manner, and tenor of life, they are, because of faith, very wise indeed; and they do please God, ordering their conversation in all righteousness, chastity and wisdom." (III, 4, 2).

It is through tradition that the barbarian peoples have received salvation. So deeply is the true faith engraven in their hearts, that if any one were to preach to them

"the inventions of the heretics, speaking to them in their own language, they would at once stop their ears, and flee as far as possible, not enduring even to listen to the blasphemous address. Thus, by means of that ancient tradition of the apostles, they do not suffer their mind to conceive anything of the (doctrines suggested by the) portentous language of these teachers, among whom neither Church nor doctrine has ever been established" (III,4,2). The theory that Scripture is the sole rule of faith, is hard to reconcile with these words of Irenaeus.

Foolish indeed would the faithful be, according to Irenaeus, were they to reject the apostolic tradition for the private opinions of the heretics, "For, prior to Valentinus, those who follow Valentinus had no existence; nor did those from Marcion exist before Marcion; nor, in short, had any of those malignant-minded people, whom I have above enumerated, any being previous to the initiators and inventors of their perversity" (III, 4, 3). The recentness of the false teachers is, therefore, sufficient to condemn them and their doctrine. The Valentinians can trace their doctrine no further back than Valentinus, the Marcionites no further than Marcion, and so on.

Furthermore, since the heretics have not the apostolic tradition, they have no right to the Scriptures. The Church, however, having the apostolic tradition has the right to the Scriptures and also the right to interpret them. Irenaeus says as much in chapter 5, bk. III. "Since, therefore, the tradition from the apostles does thus exist in the Church, and is permanent among us, let us revert to the Scriptural proof furnished by those apostles who did also write the gospel, in which they recorded the doctrine regarding God, pointing out that our Lord Jesus Christ is the truth, and that no lie is in Him." . . . "Both the apostles and their disciples thus taught as the Church preaches." . . . (III, 12, 13).

"Thus, then," says Irenaeus, "have all these men been exposed, who bring in impious doctrines regarding our

Maker and Framer, who also formed this world and above whom there is no other God; and those have been overthrown by their own arguments who teach falsehoods regarding the substance of our Lord, and the dispensation which He fulfilled for the sake of His own creature man. But (it has, on the other hand, been shown), that the preaching of the Church is everywhere consistent, and continues in an even course, and receives testimony from the prophets, the apostles, and all the disciples—as I have proved—through (those in) the beginning, the middle, and the end, and through the entire dispensation of God, and that well-grounded system which tends to man's salvation, namely, our faith; which, having been received from the Church, we do preserve, and which always, by the Spirit of God, renewing its youth, as if it were some precious deposit in an excellent vessel, causes the vessel itself containing it to renew its youth also. For this gift of God has been entrusted to the Church, as breath was to the first created man, for this purpose, that all the members receiving it may be vivified; and the (means of) communion with Christ has been distributed throughout it, that is, the Holy Spirit, the earnest of incorruption, the means of confirming our faith, and the ladder of ascent to God. 'For in the Church,' it is said, 'God hath set apostles, prophets, teachers,' and all the other means through which the Spirit works; of which all those are not partakers who do not join themselves to the Church, but defraud themselves of life through their perverse opinions and infamous behavior. For where the Church is, there is the Spirit of God; and where the Spirit of God is, there is the Church, and every kind of grace; but the Spirit is truth. Those, therefore, who do not partake of Him, are neither nourished into life from the mother's breast, nor do they enjoy that most limpid fountain which issues from the body of Christ; but they dig for themselves broken cisterns out of earthly trenches, and drink putrid water out of the mire, fleeing from the faith of

the Church lest they be convicted; and rejecting the Spirit, that they may not be instructed." (III, 24, 1).

The teaching of the Church, according to Irenaeus, is guarded and preserved by the Spirit of God, which is the Spirit of truth. "For where the Church is, there is the Spirit of God." But the Spirit of truth, the Holy Ghost, cannot co-exist with falsehood. And because the heretics have not the Holy Spirit with them, they necessarily wallow in error. "Alienated thus from the truth," he continues, "they do deservedly wallow in all error, tossed to and fro by it, thinking differently in regard to the same things at different times and never attaining to a well-grounded knowledge, being more anxious to be sophists of words than disciples of the truth. For they have not been founded upon the one rock, but upon the sand, which has in itself a multitude of stones." (III, 24, 2). Accordingly the teaching of the Church is the doctrine of life and grace, the teaching of private individuals the doctrine of death and corruption. In other words the Catholic rule of faith leads to truth and unity and to eternal life; all others rules of faith to error, dissension and eternal death.

It is in the apostolic Church, then, that one must seek the truth. She is the one rich treasure-house, she is the only depository of divine truth, the only trustworthy guarantee of eternal salvation. She is the earthly paradise of the trees of which every one may eat. Heresy, on the other hand, is the forbidden tree of knowledge, whose fruits are death-bringing. And those who would tempt us with this forbidden fruit are like the serpent beguiling Eve. (IV, Pref. 4). They 'blaspheme' and 'despise' God. (III, 24, 2). Their doctrines are putrid water full of corruption (III, 24), strange fire brought to the altar of God (IV, 26). Such doctrines must be rejected, the teachers of these doctrines must be avoided. "From all such persons, therefore, it behooves us to keep aloof, but to adhere to those who, as I have already observed, do hold the doc-

trine of the apostles, and who, together with the order of priesthood (presbyterii ordine) display sound speech and blameless conduct for the confirmation and correction of others'' (IV, 26, 4).

The one true doctrine is to be found only with the bishops of the Churches. Hence obedience to the teaching authority of the Church, that is, to the bishops and presbyters is the means of attaining and preserving the true apostolic doctrine. The presbyters are faithful stewards, ''good and wise whom the Lord sets over His household to give them their meat in due season'' (IV, 26, 5). ''Wherefore it is incumbent to obey the presbyters who are in the Church,—those who, as I have shown, possess the succession from the apostles; those who, together with the succession of the episcopate, have received the certain gift of truth, according to the good pleasure of the Father. But (it is also incumbent) to hold in suspicion others who depart from the primitive succession, and assemble themselves together in any place whatsoever, (looking upon them) either as heretics of perverse minds, or as schismatics puffed up and self-pleasing, or again as hypocrites, acting thus for the sake of lucre and vainglory. For all these have fallen from the truth'' (IV, 26, 2). Like Ignatius and Polycarp, he looks upon the bishops as the custodians and interpreters of the apostolic doctrine, and for that reason insists on obedience to them.

It is quite plain from these passages that in the mind of Irenaeus the Bible is insufficient as a rule of faith, and that private interpretation is a very insidious and blasphemous principle. The whole third book of ''*Adversus Haereses*'' is in fact a vigorous repudiation of this principle. And while the Protestant theory is condemned, the Catholic rule of faith is vindicated and defended in almost every paragraph. Scripture and tradition, handed down from the Apostles through the succession of the bishops and taught and interpreted by the bishops is the

one true rule of faith, proclaimed by Irenaeus. What else is this but the same rule proclaimed by the Catholic Church?

The unity of doctrine found in all the Churches is further guarantee that this rule of faith is the right one. "The Church, though dispersed throughout the whole world, even to the ends of the earth, has received from the apostles and their disciples this faith: (She believes) in one God, the Father Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth, and the sea, and all things that are in them; and in one Christ Jesus, the Son of God, who became incarnate for our salvation; and in the Holy Spirit, who proclaimed through the prophets the dispensations of God, and the advents, and the birth from a virgin, and the passion, and the resurrection from the dead, and the ascension into heaven in the flesh of the beloved Christ Jesus, our Lord, and His (future) manifestation from heaven in the glory of the Father 'to gather all things in one,' and to raise up anew all flesh of the whole human race, in order that to Christ Jesus, our Lord, and God, and Savior, and King, according to the will of the invisible Father, 'every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth, and that every tongue should confess' to Him, and that He should execute just judgments towards all; that He may send 'spiritual wickednesses,' and the angels who transgressed and became apostates, together with the ungodly, and unrighteous, and wicked, and profane among men, into everlasting fire; but may, in the exercise of His grace confer immortality on the righteous, and holy, and those who have kept His commandments, and have persevered in His love, some from the beginning (of their Christian course), and others from the date of their repentance, and may surround them with everlasting glory."[28] (1, 10).

[28] Tertullian gives a similar creed in chapter 13 of *De Praescriptione Haereticorum.* "Now, with regard to this rule of faith," he writes, "that we may from this point acknowledge what it is which we defend—it is,

Irenaeus has before him a picture of the universal Church, spread all over the world, handing down through the unbroken succession of the bishops the apostolic truth. The fact, that one and the same doctrine is taught in the apostolic Churches, scattered as they are all over the world, is proof that the doctrine of these Churches is true, for unity is the sign of truth. It is one of the marks of the true Church.

Harnack, commenting on this passage, writes in his *History of Dogma*, Vol. II, p. 26: "The former (Irenaeus) proclaimed the baptismal confession, definitely interpreted and expressed in an Antignostic form, to be the apostolic rule of truth (regula veritatis), and tried to prove it so. He based his demonstration on the theory that this series of doctrines embodied the faith of the Churches founded by the Apostles, and that these communities had always preserved the apostolic teaching unchanged."

"Viewed historically, this thesis, which preserved Christianity from complete dissolution, is based on two unproved assumptions and on a confusion of ideas. It is not demonstrated that any creed emanated from the Apostles, nor that the Churches they founded always

you must know, that which prescribes the belief that there is one only God, and that He is none other than the Creator of the world who produced all things out of nothing through His own Word, first of all sent forth; that this Word is called His Son, *and*, under the name of God, was seen 'in diverse manners' by the patriarchs, heard at all times in the prophets, at last brought down by the Spirit and Power of the Father into the Virgin Mary, was made flesh in her womb, and, being born of her, went forth as Jesus Christ; thenceforth He preached the new Law and the new promise of the kingdom of heaven, worked miracles; having been crucified He rose again the third day; (then) having ascended into the heavens, He sat at the right hand of the Father; sent instead of Himself the Power of the Holy Ghost to lead such as believe; will come with glory to take the saints to the enjoyment of everlasting life and of heavenly promises, and to condemn the wicked to everlasting fire, after the resurrection of both these classes shall have happened, together with the restoration of their flesh. This rule, as it will be proved, was taught by Christ, and raises amongst ourselves no other questions than those which heresies introduce, and which make men heretics."

preserved their teaching in its original form; the creed itself, moreover, is confused with its interpretation. Finally, the existence of a *fides catholica,* in the strict sense of the word, cannot be justly inferred from the essential agreement found in the doctrine of a series of communities. But, on the other hand, the course taken by Irenaeus was the only one capable of saving what yet remained of primitive Christianity, and that is its historical justification. A *fides apostolica* had to be set up and declared identical with the already existing *fides catholica.* It had to be made the standard for judging all particular doctrinal opinions, that it might be determined whether they were admissible or not."

To say that Irenaeus proclaimed the baptismal confession to be the rule of faith and tried to prove it so, is to misinterpret him. There was not the slightest reason to proclaim a rule of faith, and nothing was further from the mind of Irenaeus. The rule of faith had been proclaimed long before by the Apostles. And this apostolic rule, coming from the Apostles themselves, and preserved and handed down in the Churches through the succession of the bishops, Irenaeus is defending against the Gnostic heretics. In opposition to the teaching of these men he sums up the principal doctrines contained in the rule of faith, that "rule of truth" which every Christian "received by means of baptism." That he recognizes this rule of truth as long in existence and firmly established and uniformly preserved, not only in Gaul but throughout the world, is plain from the following passage: "As I have already observed, the Church, having received this preaching and this faith, although scattered throughout the whole world, yet, as if occupying but one house, carefully preserves it. She also believes these points (of doctrine) just as if she had but one soul, and one and the same heart, and she proclaims them, and teaches them and hands them down, with perfect harmony, as if she possessed only one mouth. For, although the languages of the

world are dissimilar, yet the import of the tradition is one and the same. For the Churches which have been planted in Germany do not believe or hand down anything different, nor do those in Spain, nor those in Gaul, nor those in the East, nor those in Egypt, nor those in Libya, nor those which have been established in the central regions of the world. But as the sun, that creature of God, is one and the same throughout the whole world, so also the preaching of the truth shineth everywhere, and enlightens all men that are willing to come to a knowledge of the truth. Nor will any one of the rulers in the Churches, however, highly gifted he may be in point of eloquence, teach doctrines different from these (for no one is greater than the Master); nor, on the other hand, will he who is deficient in power of expression inflict injury on the tradition. For the faith being ever one and the same, neither does one who is able at great length to discourse regarding it, make any addition to it, nor does one who can say but little, diminish it" (1, 10, 2).

It is not true, as Harnack maintains, that "this thesis" is based on two unproved assumptions. Irenaeus very skillfully proves his assertions. It is Harnack himself who does not prove his assertions, and the burden of proof rests with him. One may justly reply: "Quod gratis asseritur, gratis negatur." Irenaeus does not wish to prove, nor does he try to prove that the creed, formulated, as he gives it, emanated from the Apostles. But he does imply that the doctrines, enumerated in the creed given, were received from the Apostles and preserved in the Churches. That a definite teaching, clearly defined was taught by the Apostles and carefully preserved by the Churches, is well demonstrated in the work "*Adversus Haereses.*" If the Churches did not have a definite doctrine, then how account for the vehement denunciation of heresy in Irenaeus, and in Ignatius and in Polycarp before him? It was just this departure from the apostolic doctrine, this departure from a clearly de-

fined teaching, that was of such abhorrence to the early successors of the Apostles.

Moreover, what stronger proof could Irenaeus furnish than the episcopal succession going back in an unbroken line to the Apostles? Surely the successors of the Apostles, the men left in charge of the Churches founded by the Apostles, were reliable witnesses to the apostolic teaching. What reason has one to doubt their words? How could they be wrong when they all, scattered as they were all over the world, were consistent and harmonious in what they taught of Christ? Why is this agreement of the Churches, throughout the world not a sufficient proof for the true doctrine? It is not enough for Harnack to brush this argument aside with the words, "Qui nimis probat, nihil probat."[29]

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[29] *History of Dogma*, Vol. II, p. 27, note: "Irenaeus indeed asserts in several passages that all Churches—those in Germany, Iberia, among the Celts, in the East, in Egypt, in Lybia and Italy; see I. 10. 2; III. 3. 1; III, 4. 1 sq.—possess the same apostolic kerygma; but "qui nimis probat, nihil probat." Irenaeus is proving nothing here. He is only giving facts. And these facts are so well known that he takes it for granted, that his opponents will not even dare question them.

CHAPTER VI.

Tertullian.

1. *As a Witness to the Rule of Faith.*

Another noteworthy witness to the rule of faith is Tertullian. Tertullian was born at Carthage about the year 160 A. D.[1] His father was a centurion in the service of the proconsul of Africa.[2] That the centurion's gifted son received a good education is evident from his writings. Tertullian seems to have devoted himself to the study of law, and very probably entered upon the career of an advocate. The thought, the expression and the style of the man bespeak the trained lawyer. Whether Tertullian, the ecclesiastical writer, is identical with the jurist Tertullian, whose words are found in the Pandects, is not certain.

A pagan until middle age Tertullian shared the prejudices, and indulged in the shameful practices of the pagans. Captivated, however, by the courage of the martyrs, he became a Christian in the year 195 or 196 A. D. As a christian he gave himself up heart and soul to the religion of Christ. Before long he was espousing its cause in public. According to St. Jerome he was ordained to the priesthood.[3] This office he discharged most probably at Carthage.

Toward the end of the second century Montanism gained a foothold in Africa. Naturally of a stern disposition and given to extremes, Tertullian favored the rigorism of this new sect. For several years he was tending toward it. The open break with the Church did not come,

[1] Bardenhewer, *Geschichte der altkirch. Liter.*, II. Bd., p. 379.
[2] St. Jerome, *De Viris Illustribus*, 53.
[3] *Ibid.*

however, until the year 213 A. D. or thereabout.[4] But even the rigorism of this sect was not severe enough for Tertullian, so he founded a special party of his own among the Montanists. Of his later life nothing is known with certainty. According to St. Jerome he lived to an advanced age.[5] On conjecture solely critics place his death in the year 240.

As a Catholic Tertullian did much in defense of the Church. He wrote against heathenism, Judaism and heresy. His keen logic, his biting sarcasm, his burning eloquence and his original, sententious style made him a powerful and formidable adversary. In the heat of passion, however, he often proved too much, and thus instead of convincing and instructing, crushed and embittered an opponent. Having become a Montanist, he turned on the Church and attacked her with the same vehemence he had formerly used to defend her.

2. *De Praescriptione Haereticorum.*

Tertullian was the most prolific of the Latin writers. He was for the Latins, what Origen was for the Greeks. His works extend over almost every department of religious life. His master-piece, however, is the one entitled "*De Praescriptione Haereticorum.*" It is an attack on heresy, and a refutation of the arguments advanced by heretics in defense of their opinions. In it he uses his best style and strongest arguments to portray the true rule of faith. He pursues his opponents until he has cut off from them every loophole of escape. Never is he so much the advocate of the Church, as in this writing. It is this work, then, that will be considered and examined in the following chapter.

[4] Bardenhewer, *op. cit.*, II. Bd., p. 334.
[5] *Op. cit.*, 53.

3. *The Rule of Faith according to Tertullian.*

Heresy is severly censured by Tertullian. He compares it to a deadly fever, which consumes the life of the soul and ultimately leads to its destruction. Nor is any one so strong in the faith, that he is immune from this fatal disease. Just as a strong, healthy person can contract fever as well as the weak and infirm, so also can those strong in the faith succumb to the fever of heresy. "But what if a bishop, if a deacon, if a widow, if a virgin, if a doctor, if even a martyr, have fallen from the rule (of faith), will heresies on that account appear to possess the truth? Do we prove the faith by the persons, or the persons by the faith?" (ch. 3).

There is absolutely no excuse, however, for those who fall away. Our Lord and the Apostles have warned us sufficiently against false doctrines. "The Lord teaches us that many 'ravening wolves shall come in sheep's clothing.' Now what are these sheep's clothings but the external surface of the Christian profession? Who are the ravening wolves but those deceitful senses and spirits which are lurking within to waste the flock of Christ? Who are the false prophets but deceptive predictors of the future? Who are the false apostles but the preachers of a spurious gospel? Who also are the Antichrists, both now and evermore, but the men who rebel against Christ? Heresies at the present time will no less rend the Church by their perversion of doctrine, than will Antichrist persecute her at that day by the cruelty of his attacks, except that persecution makes even martyrs, (but) heresy only apostates" (ch. 4). These words reveal a deep-seated hatred of false doctrines. Like St. Ignatius and St. Polycarp, Tertullian speaks of heretics in scathing terms. They are 'ravening wolves,' Antichrists, bent on the destruction of Christ's flock.

Referring to the Epistles of St. Paul to the Galatians and to Titus, where heresy is condemned by the Apostle,

he says in chapter 6: "For this reason it is that he[6] calls the heretic *self-condemned,* because he has himself chosen that for which he is condemned. We, however, are not permitted to cherish any object after our own will, nor yet to make choice of that which another has introduced of his private fancy. In the Lord's apostles we possess our authority; for even they did not of themselves choose to introduce anything, but faithfully delivered to the nations (of mankind) the doctrine which they had received from Christ. If therefore even 'an Angel from heaven should preach any other gospel' (than theirs), he would be called accursed by us." St. Paul, like our Lord Himself, also condemned private views and interpretations in religious matters. The Christian must not be guided by the private fancies and opinions of any and every teacher. The Christian's norm is in the Apostles, and consequently also in their successors. It is to them, then, that one must go for the one true rule of faith.

Thus the Protestant rule of faith, private interpretation of Scripture, finds no favor in this work of Tertullian. Like the heretics of old, the Protestants maintain that they "treat of the Scriptures and recommend (their opinions) out of the Scriptures." Tertullian anticipates this objection. "To be sure they do," he answers. "From what other source could they derive arguments concerning the things of the faith, except from the records of the faith?" (ch. 14). "We are, therefore, come to (the gist of) our position," he says, "for at this point we were aiming, and for this we were preparing in the preamble of our address (which we have just completed)—so that we may now join issue on the contention to which our adversaries challenge us. They put forward the Scriptures, and by this insolence of theirs they at once influence some. In the encounter itself, however, they weary the strong, they catch the weak, and dismiss waverers with a

[6] St. Paul.

doubt. Accordingly, we oppose to them this step above all others, of not admitting them to any discussion of the Scriptures."

"If in these lie their resources, before they can use them, it ought to be clearly seen to whom belongs the possession of the Scriptures, that none may be admitted to the use thereof who has no title at all to the privilege" (ch. 15). Here Tertullian begins his celebrated argument from prescription. Prescription was a procedure of Roman law. It meant a claim founded on the antecedent possession of a thing and brought forth by the accused. This claim cut short the question and deprived the opponent of a hearing. The writer very aptly applies this method of procedure in his refutation of the heretics. The latter appealed to Scripture to bolster up their claims. Tertullian argues, that they have absolutely no right to appeal to the Scriptures, since the Scriptures do not belong to them. He thereby cuts the ground from under their feet, and with one stroke destroys their arguments from the Bible.

We have, he states in chapter 16, the apostolic sanction for this exclusion of heretics from the use of the Scriptures. For the Apostle "forbids us to enter on 'questions,' or to lend our ears to new-fangled statements, or to consort with a heretic 'after the first and second admonition,' not, (be it observed), after discussion. Discussion he has inhibited in this way, by designating *admonition* as the purpose of dealing with a heretic." . . .

Moreover, it is impossible to argue with the heretics from the Scriptures, because they pervert the holy Book. "Now this heresy of yours does not receive certain Scriptures; and whichever of them it does receive, it perverts by means of additions and diminutions, for the accomplishment of its own purpose; and such as it does receive, it receives not in their entirety; but even when it does receive any up to a certain point as entire, it nevertheless perverts even these by the contrivance of diverse inter-

pretations. Truth is just as much opposed by an adulteration of its meaning as it is by a corruption of its text. Their vain presumptions must needs refuse to acknowledge the (writings) whereby they are refuted. They rely on those which they have falsely put together, and which they have selected, because of their ambiguity. Though most skilled in the Scriptures, you will make no progress, when everything which you maintain is denied on the other side, and whatever you deny is (by them) maintained. As for yourself, indeed you will lose nothing but your breath, and gain nothing but vexation from their blasphemy'' (ch. 17). It is useless, therefore, to dispute with such men from the Scriptures. One only wastes time and loses patience.

In fact a discussion of the Scriptures is even a danger for the weak in faith. ''But with respect to the man for whose sake you enter on the discussion of the Scriptures, with the view of strengthening him when afflicted with doubts, (let me ask) will it be to the truth, or rather to heretical opinions that he will lean? Influenced by the very fact that he sees you have made no progress, whilst the other side is on an equal footing (with yourself) in denying and in defence, or at any rate on a like standing he will go away confirmed in his uncertainty by the discussion, not knowing which side to adjudge heretical. For, no doubt, they too are able to retort these things on us. It is indeed a necessary consequence that they should go so far as to say that adulterations of the Scriptures, and false expositions thereof, are rather introduced by curselves, inasmuch as they, no less than we, maintain that truth is on their side'' (ch. 18).

''Our appeal, therefore,'' Tertullian continues in chapter 19, ''must not be made to the Scriptures; nor must controversy be admitted on points in which victory will either be impossible or uncertain, or not certain enough.'' The point to be ascertained is, whose are the Scriptures? ''But even if a discussion from the Scriptures should not

turn out in such a way as to place both sides on a par, (yet) the natural order of things would require that this point should be first proposed, which is now the only one which we must discuss: 'With whom lies that very faith to which the Scriptures belong? From what and through whom, and when, and to whom, has been handed down that rule, by which men become Christians?' For wherever it shall be manifest that the true Christian rule and faith shall be, *there* will likewise be the true Scriptures and expositions thereof, and all the Christian traditions'' (ch. 19).

Then in the following chapters he goes on to show who has this true rule of faith, and consequently who has the exclusive right to the Scriptures. ''Christ Jesus our Lord . . . didst whilst he lived on earth, Himself declare what He was, what He had been, what the Father's will was which He was administering, what the duty of man was which he was prescribing; (and this declaration He made) either openly to the people, or privately to His disciples, of whom He had chosen the twelve chief ones to be at His side, and whom he destined to be the teachers of the nations. Accordingly, after one of these had been struck off, He commanded the eleven others, on His departure to the Father, to 'go and teach all nations, who were to be baptized into the Father, and into the Son, and into the Holy Ghost.' Immediately, therefore, so did the apostles whom this designation indicates as 'the sent.' Having, on the authority of a prophecy, which occurs in a psalm of David, chosen Matthias by lot as the twelfth, into the place of Judas, they obtained the promised power of the Holy Ghost for the gift of miracles and of utterance; and after first bearing witness to the faith in Jesus Christ throughout Judæa, and founding churches (there), they next went forth into the world and preached the same doctrine of the same faith to the nations. They then in like manner founded churches in every city, from which all the other churches, one after another, derived the tra-

dition of the faith, and the seeds of doctrine, and are every day deriving them, that they may become churches. Indeed, it is on this account only that they will be able to deem themselves apostolic, as being the offspring of apostolic churches. Every sort of thing must necessarily revert to its original for its classification. Therefore, the churches, although they are so many and so great, comprise but the one primitive church, (founded) by the apostles, from which they all (spring). In this way all are primitive, and all are apostolic, whilst they are all proved to be one, in (unbroken) unity, by their peaceful communion, and title of brotherhood, and bond of hospitality, —privileges which no other rule directs than the one tradition of the selfsame mystery'' (ch. 20).

It is this Church, then, come down from the Apostles, that, according to Tertullian, has inherited the Scriptures and has the exclusive right to interpret them. The Apostles, he says, ''founded churches in every city.'' From these churches ''all the other churches, one after another, derived *the tradition of the faith,* and the seeds of doctrine, and are every day deriving them.'' Hence these churches, ''being the offspring of apostolic churches'' and having received the same tradition of faith, in other words, the same rule of faith, are in every sense of the word apostolic. And many and great as they are, they all ''comprise but the one primitive church, (founded by the Apostles),'' because they all have the one apostolic tradition.

The doctrine of the apostolic Church, therefore, must be the norm of truth. All doctrine which agrees with this teaching, is true; that doctrine which does not is false. ''From this, therefore,'' he says, ''do we draw up our rule. Since the Lord Jesus Christ sent the apostles to preach, (our rule is) that no others ought to be received as preachers than those whom Christ appointed; for 'no man knoweth the Father save the Son, and he to whomsoever the Son will reveal Him.' Nor does the Son seem to

have revealed Him to any other than the apostles, whom He sent forth to preach—that, of course, which He revealed to them. Now, what that was which they preached, in other words—what it was which Christ revealed to them—can, as I must here likewise prescribe, properly be proved in no other way than by those very churches which the apostles founded in person, by declaring the gospel to them directly themselves, both *viva voce*, as the phrase is, and subsequently by their epistles. If, then, these things are so, it is in the same degree manifest that all doctrine which agrees with the apostolic churches—those moulds and original sources of the faith must be reckoned for truth, as undoubtedly containing that which the (said) churches received from the apostles, the apostles from Christ, Christ from God. Whereas all doctrine must be prejudged as false which savours of contrariety to the truth of the churches and apostles of Christ and God. It remains, then, that we demonstrate whether this doctrine of ours, of which we have now given the rule, has its origin in the tradition of the apostles, and whether all other *doctrines* do not *ipso facto* proceed from falsehood. We hold communion with the apostolic churches because our doctrine is in no respect different *from theirs*. This is *our* witness of truth" (ch. 21).

These words are quite clear. The writer says, there is only one way of ascertaining the teaching of Christ and the Apostles, only one means of obtaining the true rule of faith, and that is, by having recourse to "the very churches which the apostles founded in person, by declaring the gospel to them directly themselves, both *viva voce*, as the phrase is, and subsequently by their epistles." Only that "doctrine which agrees with the apostolic churches—those moulds and original sources of the faith must be reckoned for truth," that is, for the doctrine handed down by the Apostles as the teaching of Christ. On the other hand all teaching "which savours of contrariety to the truth of the churches and apostles of

Christ and God," is false, and must, therefore, be rejected. The apostolic churches, then, are our witness of the truth. They are our pledge, our security and our proof for the apostolic doctrine.

Tertullian leaves the heretics not a single loophole for escape. He immediately takes up the objections on which the false teachers seek to establish their theories. "They usually tell us," he says, "that the apostles did not know all things. . . ." Thus, they expose "Christ to blame for having sent forth apostles who had either too much ignorance or too little simplicity." "What man, then," he writes, "of sound mind can possibly suppose that they were ignorant of anything, whom the Lord ordained to be masters (or teachers), keeping them, as He did, inseparable (from Himself) in their attendance, in their discipleship, in their society, to whom, 'when they were alone, He used to expound' all things which were obscure, telling them that 'to them it was given to know those mysteries,' which it was not permitted the people to understand?" How could 'knowledge' be 'withheld' from "Peter, who is called 'the rock on which the church should be built,' who also obtained 'the keys of the kingdom of heaven,' with the power of 'loosing and binding in heaven and on earth?' Was anything, again, concealed from John, the Lord's most beloved disciple, who used to lean on His breast to whom alone the Lord pointed Judas out as the traitor, whom He commended to Mary as a son in His own stead?" (ch. 22).

Moreover, Tertullian says, the Apostles had the assistance of the Holy Ghost. "No doubt," he continues in the same chapter, "He had once said, 'I have yet many things to say unto you, but ye cannot hear them now;' but even then He added, 'When He, the Spirit of truth, shall come, He will lead you into all truth.' He (thus) shows that there was nothing of which they were ignorant, to whom He had promised the future attainment of all truth by help of the Spirit of truth. And assuredly He

fulfilled His promise, since it is proved in the Acts of the Apostles that the Holy Ghost did come down. Now they, who reject that Scripture, can neither belong to the Holy Spirit, seeing that they cannot acknowledge that the Holy Ghost has been sent as yet to the disciples, nor can they presume to claim to be a church themselves who positively have no means of proving when, and with what swaddling-clothes this body was established'' (ch. 22).

In refuting another argument of the heretics, Tertullian anticipates a similar objection common to many Protestants of modern times. Some say, he writes, that 'while the apostles perhaps proclaimed the entire rule of faith simply and fully,' ''the churches through their own fault, set it forth otherwise than the apostles had done. All these suggestions of distrust,'' says Tertullian, ''you may find put forward by the heretics. They bear in mind how the churches were rebuked by the apostle.'' . . . However, Tertullian continues, ''when they raise the objection that the churches were rebuked, let them suppose that they were also corrected; let them also remember those (churches), concerning whose faith and knowledge and conversation the apostle 'rejoices and gives thanks to God,' which nevertheless, even at this day, unite with those which were rebuked in the privileges of one and the same institution'' (ch. 27).

The unity and conformity everywhere apparent is further proof that the apostolic doctrine was handed down pure and unalloyed by the churches. Unity argues for truth, error begets division. In the Church we have unity, therefore also truth; the heretics are divided into numerous sects, an indication that they are in error. Tertullian develops this argument in chapter 28. ''Grant, then,'' he writes, ''that all have erred; that the apostle was mistaken in giving his testimony; that the Holy Ghost had no such respect to any one (church) as to lead it into truth, although sent with this view by Christ, and for this asked of the Father that He might be the teacher of truth;

grant, also, that He, the Steward of God, the Vicar of Christ, neglected his office, permitting the churches for a time to understand differently, (and) to believe differently, what He himself was preaching by the apostles—is it likely that so many churches, and they so great, should have gone astray into one and the same faith? No casualty distributed among many men issues in one and the same result. Error of doctrine in the churches must necessarily have produced various issues. When, however, that which is deposited among many is found to be one and the same, it is not the result of error, but of tradition. Can anyone, then, be reckless enough to say that they were in error who handed on the tradition?"

The priority of the Church's doctrine is another mark of its truth; while the recentness of heresy is its condemnation. "Truth," says Tertullian, "precedes its copy, the likeness succeeds the reality. Absurd enough, however, is it, that heresy should be deemed to have preceded its own prior doctrine, even on this account, because it is that (doctrine) itself which foretold that there should be heresies against which men would have to guard! To a church which possessed this doctrine, it was written—yea, the doctrine itself writes to its own church—though an Angel from heaven preach any other gospel, than that which we have preached, let him be accursed" (ch. 29).[7]

"Where was Marcion, *then,*" Tertullian continues, "that shipmaster of Pontus, the zealous student of Stoicism? Where was Valentinus *then,* the disciple of Platonism? For it is evident that those men lived not so long ago—in the reign of Antoninus, for the most part—and that they at first were believers in the doctrine of the Catholic Church, in the church of Rome under the episcopate of the blessed Eleutherus, until on account of their ever restless curiosity, with which they even infected the

[7] "Ad ejus doctrinae Ecclesiam scriptum est, imo ipsa doctrina ad Ecclesiam suam scribit: *Etsi Angelus de coelo aliter evangelizaverit citra quam nos, anathema sit* (*Gal.*, I, 8)."

brethren, they were more than once expelled" (ch. 30).

The apostolic succession, however, is Tertullian's crushing argument in favor of the Catholic rule of faith. "But," he writes, "if there be any (heresies) which are bold enough to plant themselves in the midst of the apostolic age, that they may thereby seem to have been handed down by the apostles, because they existed in the time of the apostles, we can say: Let them produce the original records of their churches, let them unfold the roll of their bishops, running down in due succession from the beginning in such a manner that (that first bishop of theirs) bishop shall be able to show for his ordainer and predecessor some one of the apostles or of apostolic men—a man, moreover, who continued stedfast with the apostles. For this is the manner in which the apostolic churches transmit their registers: as the Church of Smyrna, which records that Polycarp was placed therein by John; as also the Church of Rome, which makes Clement to have been ordained by Peter. In exactly the same way the other churches likewise exhibit (their several worthies), whom, as having been appointed to their episcopal places by apostles, they regard as transmitters of the apostolic seed. Let the heretics contrive something of the same kind. For after their blasphemy, what is there that is unlawful for them (to attempt)? But should they even effect the contrivance, they will not advance a step. For their very doctrine, after comparison with that of the apostles, will declare, by its own diversity and contrariety that it had for its author neither an apostle nor an apostolic man; because, as the apostles would never have taught things which were self-contradictory, so the apostolic men would not have inculcated teaching different from the apostles, unless they who received their instruction from the apostles went and preached in a contrary manner. To this test, therefore, will they be submitted for proof by those churches, who although they derive not their founder from apostles or apostolic men (as

being of much later date, for they are in fact being founded daily), yet since they agree in the same faith, they are accounted as not less apostolic because they are akin in doctrine. Then let all the heresies, when challenged to these two tests by our apostolic church offer their proof of how they deem themselves to be apostolic. But in truth they neither are so, nor are they able to prove themselves to be what they are not. Nor are they admitted to peaceful relations and communion by such churches as are in any way connected with apostles, inasmuch as they are in no sense themselves apostolic because of their diversity as to the mysteries of faith'' (ch. 32). Thus in the eyes of Tertullian, as of Irenaeus, the apostolic succession is the real test of true genuine doctrine. The doctrine peculiar to heretics cannot be traced back to the Apostles. Hence it is not apostolic, it is not the teaching of Christ.

Were the heretics able to invent a succession of their own going back to the Apostles, even then, they would confute themselves, for their very teaching belies its apostolic origin. The heretics teach contradictory things. Marcion teaches one thing, Valentine a contrary thing and so on. The Apostles, however, taught one and the same thing. Their successors, too, taught the self-same things. The agreement, therefore, of the Churches' doctrine with that of the Apostles is a certain sign of its truth, the disagreement of the heretics' teaching from that of the Apostles is proof of its falsehood. Thus from beginning to end it is evident from *De Praescriptione Haereticorum* that the authoritative teaching of the Church is the one true rule of faith.

SUMMARY.

From the foregoing study of the early ecclesiastical writings it is quite plain, that the Protestant rule of faith was not the one taught and observed in the early Church. Private interpretation was severely censured by the early Fathers. They saw in private judgment the root of heresy, dissension and evil. Their one and only standard of belief, their guiding star in doubt and controversy, was the tradition of the Apostles handed down in the apostolic Churches, and taught and interpreted by the bishops.

St. Clement, the peace-loving Doctor, intimately acquainted with the Apostles, Peter and Paul, and one of the successors to the Fisherman's throne, testifies to the divine, authoritative teaching power of the bishops in his Epistle to the Corinthians. St. Ignatius, holy Martyr, also known to the Apostles, and Bishop of one of the oldest communities in the Church, bears witness to this same divine teaching power in his death-message to the Churches of Asia Minor. Be united with your bishop, submit to the bishop as to Jesus Christ, be obedient to the bishop and to the presbyters as to God Himself, is the clarion cry, he utters on the way to martyrdom. And St. Polycarp, the friend of Ignatius and the devoted disciple of the Apostle St. John, is a living exemplar of obedience to ecclesiastical authority. His unswerving fidelity to the lessons he had learned from St. John, and his utter abhorrence of any departure from the apostolic doctrine, is a noble tribute to the authoritative teaching power of the Church. He preferred to die rather than speak evil of the King who had saved him.

This unflinching fidelity of the Martyr Polycarp shines forth with renewed splendor in his youthful disciple and friend Irenaeus. It was St. Irenaeus, the learned Bishop of Lyons, that sprang to the defense of the one true rule of faith, when the Gnostic heretics were trying to over-

throw it. With unprecedented rigor did he assail the private interpretations of a Valentinus, a Basilides and a Marcion. Private interpretation, personal views and individual theories he plainly shows have no place in the doctrine of Christ and His Church. They are absolutely incompatible with the teaching of the Apostles. There is but one true rule of faith, and that is the tradition of the Apostles, preserved in the Churches and taught by the bishops. That the Churches have this apostolic rule of faith is clear from the successions of the bishops, which go back in unbroken line to the Apostles themselves; and it is confirmed by the harmonious agreement of the Churches the world over.

The arguments of Irenaeus are sealed and cemented by the gifted jurist Tertullian. If Irenaeus stemmed the tide of heresy, it was Tertullian that dealt the final crushing blow to all exponents of private interpretation. Clothing his arguments in legal attire and proceeding with the ingenuity of the gifted lawyer, he shows the heretics that they have not even the *right* to *use* the Scriptures, much less to argue about them, and to interpret them according to their own fancy. At the same time he maintains that the one and only rule of faith is the authoritative voice of the Church. And like Irenaeus, he proves it by appealing to the apostolic succession in the Churches and to the harmonious belief of Christians scattered throughout the world. The faithful all over the world could not be agreed on one and the same thing unless it were true.

Thus in the testimony of Clement of Rome, of Ignatius of Antioch, of Polycarp of Smyrna, of Irenaeus of Gaul and of Tertullian of Carthage there is a chain of evidence strong and incontestable for the Catholic rule of faith: the divine authoritative teaching power of the Catholic Church.

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No. 22

THESES

DEUS LUX MEA

THESES

QUAS

AD DOCTORATUM

IN

SACRA THEOLOGIA

APUD UNIVERSITATEM CATHOLICAM AMERICAE

CONSEQUENDUM

PUBLICE PROPUGNABIT

ALPHONSUS JOANNES COAN, O. F. M.

PROVINCIAE SS. CORDIS JESU, ST. LUDOVICI, MO.

S. THEOL. LICENCIATUS.

THESES

1

The Protestant theory that the Bible, privately interpreted, is the sole rule of faith is untenable.

2

The Gospel sayings of Jesus plainly indicate that He meant His Church to possess the three-fold authority to teach, to rule and to sanctify mankind.

3

The Epistles of St. Paul bear ample testimony to this authority in the primitive Church.

4

The New Testament concept of Church authority includes the recognition of infallibility in its exercise.

5

St. Clement's Letter to the Corinthians is a noteworthy witness to the Catholic rule of faith.

6

St. Clement's Letter is not merely a friendly exhortation written in the name of the Roman Church, but it is an authoritative message from the Bishop of Rome.

7

Chapter 44 of Clement's Letter is not, as Baur asserts, merely the wish to give the congregational constitution which existed in his time the sanction of apostolic authority.

8

The words therein, "with the consent of the whole Church," do not signify a democratic form of Church government.

9

The Didache, far from favoring the Protestant rule of faith, furnishes confirmatory evidence in favor of the Catholic acceptance of the authoritative teaching of the Church.

10

Chapter 15 of the Didache cannot be adduced as an argument for the congregational system of Church government.

11

The Didache is not a proof, as Harnack and others maintain, that the bishops and deacons were dependent upon the itinerant ministers for their teaching authority.

12

The Ignatian Letters are a repudiation of private interpretation in doctrinal matters.

13

The Ignatian Epistles bear witness that the three-fold office of bishop, priest and deacon is of apostolic institution.

14

St. Polycarp, the disciple of St. John, is a trustworthy witness to the apostolic tradition.

15

The repeated insistence of St. Irenaeus on the conformity of true belief with the traditional teaching of the apostolic Churches is totally exclusive of the Protestant rule of faith.

16

The testimony of Hegesippus is important evidence in favor of the apostolic succession.

17

In his work *The Prescription of Heretics*, Tertullian makes plain that private interpretation of Scripture, the favorite principle of heretics, is a false guide, leading to error.

18

The primacy of the Popes is evidenced in the works of Clement, Ignatius and Irenaeus, while the conduct, neither of Irenaeus nor of Polycarp, can be construed into a practical denial of it.

19

The view of Sohm and others that the primitive Church was guided by inspired teachers charismatically endowed, and that in post-Apostolic times it was transformed into the Catholic Church by the introduction of the hierarchical organization, cannot be maintained.

20

The well-known passage on Christ in Josephus' *Antiquities*, XVIII, 3, 3, while probably retouched by a Christian hand, is of value as a testimony to the historical reality of Jesus.

21

The Christ-myth theory, proposed by a few modern radical scholars, contradicts the evidence of Scripture and is inconsistent with historical facts.

22

While some few general similarities may be found between Zoroastrianism and Christianity, it can in no wise be held that Christianity is in any way dependent upon it for its doctrines.

23

Zoroastrianism, though commanding admiration for many excellent features, is greatly inferior to the revealed religion of Christ.

24

The wonderful propagation of the Christian religion cannot be depreciated by comparison with the wide and rapid diffusion of Mithraism.

25

The miraculous element in the Gospels is so intimately woven into the narrative, that one may not consistently reject the miracles as spurious and accept the sayings of Jesus as authentic.

26

The theory, that our idea of God is inborn, is opposed to the teaching of the Church.

27

That the human intellect already in this life enjoys an immediate intuition of the Divine Essence, has no foundation, in Scripture or Tradition.

28

Regarding God's relation to evil, we must hold that He can will natural evil, and evil inflicted as a punishment, only *per accidens* and that He can never will sin, but merely permits it.

29

That God created the world is clearly demonstrated in Holy Writ and Tradition.

30

The ultimate purpose of Creation (*finis operis*) is, primarily, the glorification of God, secondarily, the beatification of His rational creatures.

31

The Divinity of Christ is firmly established by numerous passages in the New Testament writings.

32

Sacred Scripture ascribes to the Holy Ghost divine attributes both of being and of life.

33

The dogmatic teaching of the Church in regard to the integrity of Christ's human nature is merely the technical formulation of a truth plainly contained in Holy Scripture and Tradition.

34

The sacred humanity of Christ as a whole, and its several members, especially His Sacred Heart, are entitled to divine adoration.

35

It is *de fide* that the faith whereby man is justified is not a confident persuasion of being esteemed righteous in the sight of God, but a dogmatic or theoretical belief in the truths of Divine Revelation.

36

For several centuries before the Protestant Reformation, the belief in the seven Sacraments was universal throughout the Church.

37

Christ himself instituted all the Sacraments in the sense that He alone, by His passion and death, is their meritorious cause.

38

The Sacraments are really and truly efficient causes *ex opere operato*, producing their effects independently of the merits and disposition of the recipients, not placing an obstacle to grace (*non ponentibus obicem*).

39

Baptism is necessary for salvation, but, under certain conditions the place of Baptism by water (*Baptismus fluminis*) may be supplied by Baptism of desire (*Baptismus flaminis*), or by Baptism of blood (*Baptismus sanguinis*).

40

The New Testament contains two classic texts which prove the Real Presence, viz., Our Lord's promise recorded in the sixth chapter of St. John's Gospel, and the words of institution as reported by the synoptics and St. Paul (I Cor. xi, 23 *sqq.*).

41

Regarding the interpretation of the Hexaemeron, theologians and scientists are free to adopt whatever theory they prefer, provided it be reasonable and not opposed to the doctrine of the Church.

42

With regard to the deluge it seems not to be contradictory to the Scripture narrative, to admit a relative universality.

43

There is not sufficient evidence to prove, that the facts recorded in the Book of Jonas are unhistorical.

44

The *Damnatio Memoriae*, a principle known to the peoples of antiquity, seems to be the best solution for the omissions in St. Matthew's genealogy.

45

The text of Matthew i, 16, despite the seemingly contrary reading of Syrus Sinaiticus, refers to the supernatural birth of Christ.

46

Three conditions are required to constitute a mortal sin, namely, a grave matter, full knowledge of the evil and full consent of the will.

47

Man is obliged by a divine precept to love his neighbor.

48

The obligation of receiving Holy Communion is imposed upon the faithful both by a divine and by an ecclesiastical law.

49

The arguments which furnish the basis for Henry George's attack on private ownership will not stand investigation.

50

The interest-taker is justified on the grounds of presumption, analogy and possession.

51

Canons 80-86.

52

Canons 518-530.

53

Canons 762-769.

54

Canons 1043-1047.

55

Canons 1094-1099.

56

The seven Ignatian Letters, as enumerated by Eusebius and as contained in the so-called Middle Recension, must be accepted as the genuine and authentic work of St. Ignatius of Antioch.

57

According to internal and external evidence the date of the Didache must be assigned not to the middle of the second century, but rather to the end of the first or to the beginning of the second century.

58

The Catholic Church in the English Colonies on the eve of the American Revolution was greatly thwarted by religious intolerance.

59

The years 1784-1789 mark a critical period in the history of the Catholic Church in America.

60

The evangelization of Upper California (the present state of California) is the work of the Franciscan Friars, who entered the new territory in the year 1769 under the leadership of Junipero Serra.

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BIOGRAPHY.

Alphonse Liguori John Coan was born at Ashland, Wis., October 20, 1892. He received his elementary training at St. Agnes' Parochial School and his classical education at St. Joseph Seraphic College, Teutopolis, Ill. He entered the Order of Friars Minor at Teutopolis, Ill., June 21, 1911. Having made his religious profession June 22, 1912, he spent two years at Quincy, Ill. in the study of humanities. Thereupon he pursued the prescribed courses in philosophy and theology at the Franciscan Seminary in Cleveland, West Park, Ohio. Raised to the priesthood on June 25, 1919, at Cleveland, he was sent to St. Louis, Mo. to finish his theological course in the Franciscan Friary of that city. The following year (1920-21) he devoted to the teaching of the classics at St. Joseph Seraphic College, Teutopolis, Ill. In the fall of 1921 he matriculated at the Catholic University of America. Here he specialized in the study of Apologetics and attended the courses in Dogmatic Theology and New Testament Exegesis. He received the degrees of S. T. B. and S. T. L. in June 1922.